

PLANNING FOR LABOUR

" HUSBAND JUSTICE AND YE SHALL GARNER PEACE "

PLANNING FOR LABOUR

A SYMPOSIUM

THE PHILADELPHIA CHARTER

1. Labour is not a commodity ;
2. Freedom of expression and Association are essential to sustained progress ;
3. Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity

PRESENTED BY

THE LABOUR FORUM, NEW DELHI

on the occasion of

THE PREPARATORY ASIAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE I.L.O.

held in New Delhi in October—November 1947

PUBLISHERS

The Labour Publications Trust

Sriramouram — Bangalore

First Edition 1947
Price Rupees Eight only

Printed by Shri G Srinivasan, Proprietor, Orient Power Pr
11, St John's Road, Bangalore.

PREFACE

The Indian Labour Forum has performed a most useful service in preparing and publishing the present symposium on Indian Labour Problems. Asia is to-day moving into a new phase of her age-long history. She has already made great strides towards political freedom and further advances in the political field seem likely to take place at an accelerated pace. In these circumstances it is natural that her peoples should be giving increasing attention to the purposes for which political freedom is to be used. Throughout the world the war and its aftermath have given a new emphasis to aspirations towards a fuller and more humane life for the ordinary citizen and towards the economic problems which must be solved if these aspirations are to be fulfilled. The Preparatory Asian Regional Conference—the first Conference of its kind—which is to meet in New Delhi on 27th October is designed to give an opportunity to representatives of the Governments, employers and workers of Asian countries and territories of the Far East to focus attention upon these issues and to prepare the way for the adoption of effective international and national measures designed to promote a higher standard of life for the peoples of Asia.

The present symposium contains a most valuable survey of some of the problems involved in this vast undertaking and it is a great pleasure to congratulate those responsible for it upon their vision and foresight. If similar studies could be prepared of the comparable problems of the other Asian countries and territories, an unprecedented wealth of detailed information would be available as a basis for the hard thinking which is necessary if the general aspirations for the future well-being of the peoples of Asia which have now secured such widespread acceptance, are to be translated into terms of concrete achievement.

New York
27th September 1947

EDWARD J. PHELAN
Director-General,
International Labour Office

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Free India has many problems to face but none more vital than that of the amelioration of the condition of India's toiling millions. The Indian National Congress under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi has always stood for this, and our duty demands redemption of the pledge already given. It means planning the future on foundations of social justice and equity, which implies the establishment of a new economic structure, shorn of the many ugly features having their roots deep in economic mal-adjustment and degrading social distinctions, which have vitiated the past and threaten the future. To this our Government is irrevocably committed and to the fulfilment of this task, we shall bend all our energies and harness all our resources.

The worker as the architect of our country's destiny, who toils and sweats and suffers in silence to sustain the life of the community, must occupy a distinct and exalted place in the social order of our dreams—an order based on the recognition of the dignity of labour and new social values.

The problem of labour welfare planning is not one which can be treated in isolation; it has to be an integral part of the national economic plan and complementary to the national scheme of industrial development, for, any labour plan, not so broad-based or unrelated to the main current of our economic policy, will be lop-sided with all the attendant hazards. The formulation of an integrated plan is an urgent task. While a clear picture of the shape of things to come is still to emerge, we can at least be sure of one thing. Neither weak doses of medicine nor anything like superficial treatment is likely to serve the purpose. The policy of *laissez faire* has to be bade good-bye to and all elements in the economic life of the country have to be prepared to readjust their outlook and policy. The National Plan has to be based on new, if not revolutionary concepts. For example, in planning the future labour policy and determining the future wage structure, it is the minimum requirements of a reasonable standard of living of the worker that has to be the guiding factor rather than the capacity of the industry to pay. It should not be far wrong to assume that an industry, which cannot assure to its workers a minimum standard of living and creature comforts, can hardly justify its existence on rational grounds. Jarring though this may sound, it is impossible to reconcile our anxiety to improve the workers,

lot with the perpetuation of serfdom inherent to sub-standard wages and antiquated working conditions.

Then again, the Indian working class has to be considered as a single unit for purposes of treatment. We cannot be oblivious of the fact that the strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link. By this is meant that while we shall continue and intensify our well-begun efforts in the direction of promoting the welfare of the industrial workers, we cannot any longer ignore the large and dangerous pockets of depressed groups of toilers who constitute the bulk of our working class—the agricultural labourer. Nor can we shut our eyes to the most miserable plight of the conservancy workers, that unfortunate mass of humanity forsaken by God and condemned by man. Some of these are matters which are the primary concern of Provincial Governments, but we are determined that neither the immensity of the task nor its complexities should deflect us from making a beginning, here and now.

We have already drawn up and are working on a five-year plan. This includes a revision of the Indian Factories Act, the Trade Unions Act and the Mines Act with a view to enlarge their scope and bring them in line with modern trends. Suitable steps have already been taken in this direction as well as towards laying down a standard procedure for the settlement of industrial disputes. Action has also been initiated to extend the provision of maternity benefits, to regulate the conditions of work in shops and commercial undertakings, in road transport and other transport services, and on plantations and to start important welfare schemes for miners. A Bill for the provision of health insurance for industrial workers has been introduced and a Central Labour Bureau for the promotion of research and dissemination of labour intelligence has been established.

The experience of other countries and our own limited experience of the working of a National Employment Service has convinced us of its intrinsic value and usefulness as a machinery for the efficient and scientific organisation of industrial and other employment with a view to ensuring the full use of the country's productive resources. This service besides being used for the best possible distribution of man-power, will also be necessary for the operation of future plans of social security. The Provincial and States Governments, who were consulted sometime back, have favoured the idea of a permanent employment service, and the question of enlarging the scope of the

present organisation and placing it on a sounder footing is engaging the attention of the Ministry of Labour.

It is necessary in the context of our peculiar conditions to guard against some obvious dangers. Catchwords and shibboleths are abroad. We run the risk of being caught unawares in the trap of precipitate action based on immature plans. Therefore I repeat what I said at the last International Labour Conference that a general prescription of remedies for the ills of labour, unrelated to its immediate environment and based on principles drawn from remote experience, is sooner or later bound to bring these remedies into disrepute, if only because they will prove to be impracticable.

Another problem which is directly connected with our present needs as well as future requirements is the pressing urgency of stepping up overall production, and no scheme which ignores this basic fact has any chance of success. Anything which tends to impede production or prejudices the fullest utilization of productive resources is evidently against the interests of the country and must be dealt with as such. Government would do everything in their power to prevent such dangerous contingencies, but it would be idle to deny that this could not be achieved without the closest collaboration between capital and labour. On one hand, industrialists, at any rate, such of them as still swear by long-discredited notions, have to shed their greed and prejudices; on the other, labour has to wake up to the realization that each working day lost or each hour wasted or otherwise frittered away reduces the national dividend and contracts production which is tantamount to criminal negligence.

Labour Forum as a learned society has been doing very useful work in fostering a scientific study of labour problems, and has much to its credit. The publication of this excellent collection of articles contributed by scholars of eminence and others who can speak with authority on the subjects dealt with, is a commendable effort worthy of the great occasion it is intended to mark. It presents a vivid picture of labour in India in its lights and shades, and will, no doubt help a great deal in the proper understanding of our outstanding problems.

New Delhi

JAGJIVAN RAM

9th October, 1947

Minister for Labour, Govt of India

EDITORIAL NOTE

This Symposium, which we are presenting to the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference of the I.L.O. and to students of social thought and social planning in India and Asia, is the first venture of its kind undertaken by the Labour Forum. It is an earnest of what we have in mind and what we propose to do in future—organisation of one vital aspect of sociological research, justification of the ways and purposes of advanced social thought to the life and work of the toiling masses, linking up research with planning, bridging the hiatus between the world of thought and the world of life, in short, creation of purposeful and socially-inspired public opinion for the progressive but undelayed application of ever-deepening concepts of social justice to the life of the common man.

The actual idea of this Symposium was mooted by Shri R. Rao, Councillor of the International Labour Office. The Labour Forum took it up with gusto, for, it was looking for a 'break', a jumping-off ground for a career of service. Shri Rao's advice and assistance with regard to the lay-out etc., of the Symposium have been available to us, all these months, in the most abundant measure; he has actually been the Forum's inspirational mainstay in this venture.

Our difficulties have been manifold but the response to our request for contributions has been in the nature of a veritable flood—a response symptomatic of the commendable and hope-giving rising tide of earnestness among the students of social thought in this country. The contributions which have not appeared in this volume we have reluctantly laid by for a subsequent publication—we had to practice an unwilling delimitation. We thank them all, those whose contributions have appeared in print and those whose contributions we had to lay by and we apologise to the latter.

Our profound gratitude is due to Mr. Edward J. Phelan, Director-General of the I. L. O. for the readiness with which he agreed to launch the Symposium, with a prefatory word of cheer and encouragement, giving the Symposium, which we are presenting to an inter-Asian Conference, a truly supra-national touch. Our deepest thanks are due to

the Hon'ble Shri Jagjivan Ram, Minister for Labour, Government of India, for the Introduction he has kindly written, giving an authoritative statement on Free India's labour-planning policy.

We are most grateful to the Labour Publications Trust, Bangalore, a non-commercial organisation dedicated to the service of Labour, for making this publication possible and, what is more, for offering to be the Forum's future publishers and specially to their live-wire Secretary, Shri R. V. Gurjale, without whose unstinting co-operation the Symposium would not have seen the light of day. Personally, I am deeply indebted to Shri V. Lakshmi Pathy, Secretary, the Labour Forum, for the indefatigable manner in which he went about the job of getting the material for the publication together and hard, not hard hearted, way in which he drove me to complete my share of the work, and to my other two colleagues on the Editorial Board—Major T. Ramachandra, who has been an unfailing source of inspiration to me in this effort, beside being my mentor and to Miss. C. A. Radha Bai who has mothered this venture.

Our gratitude is also due to Shri G. Srinivasan, proprietor of the Orient Power Press, Bangalore, for the all-out effort he put in to bring the volume out in time and the workers of the Press, who heroically raced against time, slept little and worked over-time.

We place this volume in the friendly hands of the public with the hope that they will make it their special task to help the masses come into their own.

NEW DELHI .
10th October 1947

T. L. A. ACHARYA
Chairman, Editorial Board

BACKGROUND

[THIS SYMPOSIUM of contributions from persons interested in labour questions is designed to draw public attention to the large amount of work which remains to be done in the social field in this country. The political changes which have recently been consummated and the consequential changes now in progress impose an additional obligation on the people of the two Dominions to make haste with social reform. Such reform if it is to be of a permanent character, must be broad-based on the general will, and it must be the result of exchanges of views between representatives of various schools of thought and of compromises arrived at with the sole aim of facilitating the smooth course of social progress. The Preparatory Asian Regional Conference of the International Labour Organisation which is being held in New Delhi from 27th October to 5th November 1947, in response to an invitation from the Government of India, is an important occasion, and the many problems of labour in Asian countries will be considered at this Conference. The Labour Forum desires to make its own contribution to the forth-coming discussions by publishing this symposium, and in order to provide the readers of this volume with the background of this Conference, has included in it an account of the proceedings of a meeting of the Labour Forum held on the 12th April 1947 which was addressed by Shri R. Rao, Counsellor of the International Labour Organisation, under the presidency of Shri S. Lall, Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, at New Delhi, and at which the arrangements for this Symposium were discussed.]

Shri Rao averred that regional conferences were empirical or experimental in character. That was quite true. International Labour Problems were rapidly assuming a complex character, or it might be that, with more earnest efforts at international organisation, their complexity was being increasingly appreciated. At the time of World War II, it was widely believed that industrial competition, or competition between leading industrial countries for markets, led to war, and that a principal factor in such competition was the employment of cheap labour. Public opinion in some of the principal industrial countries sought to remedy this situation

by endeavouring to bring about the establishment of uniform labour standards. Such was the origin of the International Labour Organisation. But events in the interwar years had shown that international competition based on cheap labour was only one factor—and not perhaps a major factor—in the origin of modern wars; these events had also demonstrated that the equalisation of labour conditions was by no means as easy as had seemed at first. An important factor in the determination of labour standards was, for instance, the question of wages. In order to ensure that the wage rates were the same in all countries, it was necessary to have a common measure, a common currency. Nothing was more difficult at the present time than the establishment of a common currency for all the world. Furthermore, any attempt to standardise wages on a world basis would also involve the establishment of a common nomenclature for the very large number of different trades; the establishment of correspondence between one country and another with regards to the processes of manufacture, which differed considerably, presented serious difficulties. The departure from the Gold Standard had made it extremely difficult to have anything like a common measure for all countries in respect of wages. For these and other reasons it had been found that the uniformisation of labour standards was not as easy as had at first seemed.

The ruling concept on the eve of the termination of the first world war was still that the world would be composed of various sovereign States of equal potency, at any rate in theory. Political practices and administrative standards were implicitly assumed to be the same, or very similar, in all countries. Subsequent experience had taught that revolutionary changes might be ushered in, and that these changes determined in the last analysis, the nature of the political and administrative framework in the different countries.

With increasing experience it was, therefore, found that the regulation of labour conditions involved the consideration of a great many factors, and that it was not enough to lay down general principles. On the other hand, if labour regulations were to be really effective, it was necessary to take account of the different conditions, the different systems, in the different parts of the world—the different stages of

economic and social evolution and then prescribe suitable measures to deal with them. Even at the First International Labour Conference held in 1919 in Washington, it would be noticed that it was necessary to provide different standards for different countries in the Hours Convention; in the case of India different standards to those laid down for the industrially more advanced countries had to be prescribed on account of the fact that it was a newly industrialised country and in view of its climatic and other conditions. Special clauses were inserted in respect of some of the newly industrialised countries in some of the Conventions adopted by the International Labour Conference during the interwar period, but as greater experience was gained it became clearer that these special clauses by themselves would not make a great deal of difference. In the case of the industrially underdeveloped countries, it was not only necessary to regulate existing conditions, it was also essential to take positive steps for the improvement of existing conditions. For instance, in the case of technical and vocational training facilities, the situation was very different in advanced industrial countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States to what it was in the industrially underdeveloped countries. In the United Kingdom and the United States there were well established technical educational institutions of long standing, and there was a recognised system providing for training by practical work in factories of apprentices or of students with theoretical qualifications. These conditions did not obtain in countries like China and India. In these countries there were certain industries, but in order to ensure a supply of suitably trained skilled workers for further industrial development it had been found necessary to send craftsmen abroad for advanced industrial training. If these craftsmen had to be sent abroad, as for instance in the case of Indian workers who were sent to the United Kingdom during the war or of Chinese workers who were sent to the United States, then it was necessary to ensure that special facilities should be provided to the trainees. This was only one instance. There were many more instances of this kind, all of which required detailed consideration. In the case of the newly industrialised countries, if the evils of the older industrial revolution were to be avoided, if the process of industrialisation was not to be detrimental to the interests of any part of the

community and was, on the other hand, to benefit the entire community, the regulation of labour conditions had to be systematically studied and proceeded with. Every aspect of such regulation, and the question had numerous aspects, called for detailed consideration

As to the genesis of the Asian Regional Conference, it might be traced to the attention given by the Governing Body or the Emergency Committee of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office even during the war to the problems of the transitional period between the termination of the war and the establishment of peace-time conditions. The Chairman of the present meeting, Shri Lall was the representative of the Government of India on the Governing Body when this problem of transition was first considered in London in 1942. Having regard to the conditions then prevailing in Asian countries and to the large place that the war in Asia occupied in the global war, Shri Lall proposed that the special problems of Asian countries should be studied with particular care and that a regional approach would be found to be most fruitful. His proposal was generally assented to by the Governing Body. The members of the Governing Body were, of course, aware that the war had wrought and would bring about very great changes in Asia, that, Asia could no longer continue to remain an undeveloped part of the world, and that the economic, industrial and social developments which the war had set in motion should be guided properly and on lines beneficial to Asia in particular and to the world in general.

That -Shri Lall's initiative in the Governing Body--was the real starting point, although it must be pointed out that resolutions proposing the convocation of an Asian Regional Conference moved by workers' members of the Indian Delegation had been adopted by the International Labour Conference in earlier years and that the proposal was also put forward by Shri Shanmukham Chetty at the New York Conference in 1941. Then, in 1944 when a Conference of the International Labour Organisation was held at Philadelphia, it had before it a series of proposals for the future. The war was obviously approaching its end, and the adaptation of the Organisation and its activities to the needs of the postwar world was naturally an immediate pre-occupation. These proposals relating to the future activities of the

Organisation included a proposal to convene a Southeast Asian Regional Conference as soon as circumstances permitted. The proposal was unanimously approved by the Conference at Philadelphia and it was thereafter taken up by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. After some preliminary negotiations the Governing Body decided that a Preparatory Asian Regional conference should be held in New Delhi in 1947 and that it would be followed by the First Asian Regional Conference in China in 1948. Generous invitations had been extended by the Indian and Chinese Governments to hold these two Conferences in India and China respectively, and the Governing Body gratefully accepted these invitations.

The three Asian Member States of the International Labour Organisation—China, India and Siam—would naturally take part in the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference. There were two other Member States in the Far Eastern region, Australia and New Zealand, and the Governing Body had decided to invite them as well, as the International Labour Organisation was an international and inter-racial body; it was a universal body and not confined to this or that group of peoples or powers. Australia and New Zealand were largely agricultural countries, but their agriculture had been modernised and transformed into a highly lucrative business. The experience of these countries might be valuable to Asian countries. The Philippines, were also an Asian State in the Far Eastern region already admitted into the United Nations. The Governing Body had consequently decided to send an invitation to the Philippines as well. There was good reason to expect that the Philippines were keenly interested in the activities of the International Labour Organisation in general and in the forthcoming Preparatory Asian Regional Conference to be held in India in particular.

The Governing Body was not, however, satisfied in the case of the Far Eastern region with the restriction of the convocation to sovereign States. There were many areas in Southeast Asia, populous, vast in extent, possessed of great resources and of considerable importance to world economy, and so far as labour policy was concerned, largely autonomous, although non-sovereign from a technical international point of view. It was thought that particularly in the case

of regional conferences such areas should have individual representation and that it should not be merged in the metropolitan delegations. With a view to considering the extent to which and the manner in which representation should be accorded to these non self governing territories at the Preparatory Asian Conference the Governing Body appointed a committee. Consultations with the metropolitan countries were held by the Director General of the Office as a result of which it was decided that separate invitations should be sent to Burma Ceylon the Malayan Union and Singapore which would be represented by individual delegations of their own. So far as other British territories in Asia which were not thus represented were concerned there would be a delegation from the United Kingdom.

As to Indo China and Indonisia the French and Netherlands Governments expressed the view that for all international purposes they the French and Netherlands commonwealths were unions composed of all their respective territories in all parts of the world and would be represented as such at international conferences. They had added however that in the composition of the delegations full account would be taken of the regional character of the Conference.

The improvement of labour conditions necessitated economic development. There could not be increased prosperity without increased production. Having regard to the important part which the United States had played in the Second World War particularly in the Far Eastern region and having regard also to the need for assistance from the United States for the economic development of Asian countries the Governing Body decided that it would be desirable to associate the United States with the Asian Regional Conferences. But as the United States had no longer any territories in Asia it was decided that an invitation to send only an observer delegation to the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference to be held in India should be addressed to the U S A. Furthermore, in view of increasing importance and the development in recent years of the international relations of Nepal, the Governing Body decided that an invitation should be addressed to that country to send an observer,

After referring to the Agenda Shri Rao concluded by observing that while official institutions, whether national or

international, could provide the necessary machinery, opportunities and framework for the development of social policy, the effective implementation of such policy depend to a very large extent on the support for it extended by the general public. Such support could not be expected to be forthcoming spontaneously. It would come only as a result of intelligent, painstaking and devoted study of all the questions involved. It was for voluntary associations such as the *Labour Forum* to undertake studies of this kind, to criticise policy where it was deficient and to extend support in full measure where such approval was well merited. In the formulation and implementation of social policy, it was the business of each national Government to ensure that such advantages as could be derived from existing international organisations were fully availed of, and it was for international organisations to take all possible steps to ensure that particular countries pursued policies which were not contrary to the common interest of all the world. Governments and international organisations should not be regarded as functioning separately or as pursuing irreconcilable policies. Far from that being the case, national action and international action should be so designed as to be mutually complementary. The Conference would, however, represent not the culmination of the endeavour to improve conditions of work in Asian countries, but just a starting point. The real success of these attempts would in very large measure be determined by the understanding and support forthcoming from the general public. In interpreting and explaining to the public and educating it as to the objectives aimed at in the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference and other attempts of that kind, the *Labour Forum* would be performing a most necessary and valuable public service.

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A SOCIAL SECURITY PLAN FOR INDIA

PROFESSOR B. P. ADARKAR

Prof. B. P. Adarkar must be reckoned as India's expert on the subject of Social Security—shall we say, our Beveridge? The Workmen's State Insurance Bill—it does not, perhaps come anywhere near what Professor Adarkar wanted it to be—is an outcome of the able investigations he made and the now well-known Report on Health Insurance that he prepared for the Government of India.

He gives us a treble-decked plan of Social Security—Social Insurance, Social Assistance and Ancillary Measures, each supplementing and supporting the other. In India, you do not have to go out of your way to make out a case for Social Security. The agonising Indian scene cries

out clamorously for it. Professor Adarkar insists that a programme of national economic development that is unaccompanied by a plan of Social Security is unsound and dangerous. In effect, Social Security and Social Assistance are means whereby the edge of maldistribution of wealth could be blunted to some extent. The Professor is conscious of the fact that almost the whole country needs Social Security, in a manner of speaking. But he is pragmatist enough to realise that what is possible is a gradually-built structure, perhaps a loose but planned series of Social Security Schemes for different categories or classes which could, in the fullness of time, be strung together and integrated into a comprehensive and all-embracing pattern with the whole of India as its range.

SOCIAL SECURITY is one of the bed-rock ideas underlying the social philosophy of the post-war world and has been emphasised in the various important pronouncements regarding the peace aims of the United Nations which bear upon the Four Freedoms. For the vast majority of the people of the world, in the socio-economic sphere, it is the Freedom from Want which is the most significant; and the fifth point of the Atlantic statment indicates the way to achieve it, for this point makes it clear that the signatories "desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field, with the object of securing, for all, improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security." The implications of the idea of Social Security are: firstly, that a regime of free private enterprise results in the existence of great masses of underprivileged persons; secondly, that an uncontrolled system has shown itself to be subject to economic and social upheavals far more violent than democracy, in the twentieth century, can tolerate without interference; and thirdly, that the State must assume the responsibility of providing the fundamental or basic security to the common man in the economic sphere. The minimum contents of this security are wisely described by an English economist in the following words:—1

"The citizen of a democracy should be guaranteed, as of right, enough food to maintain him in health. He should be assured a minimum standard of shelter, clothing, and fuel. He should be given full and equal opportunities of education. He should have leisure and facilities for enjoying it. He should be secured against the risk of unemployment, ill-health, and old age. Above all the presence of children should not be allowed to bring with it misery for the parents, deprivation for the children, and poverty for all. All these things inhere in the individual as his citizen's rights."

An American Committee of experts went much further in defining the contents of social security and enumerated the following: "Security for employment (education, employment

1 Geoffrey Crowther, in an article on "Where do we go from here?" in *Fortune*, October 1941, p. 94.

offices, resettlement, and soil-conservation programmes); security in the availability of employment; security of reasonable standards of working conditions, security of some income while unemployed; security of retirement income; of recreation; of self-improvement; of medical and hospital assistance; security of one's family in case of one's accident, invalidity, ill-health, or death."¹ Social security, thus, in its widest connotation, may become almost co-terminous with social progress itself, while, on the other hand, it may merely seek to abolish Want. But, as Sir William Beveridge remarks in his monumental Report, "Want is one only of five giants on the road to reconstruction and in some ways the easiest to attack. The others are Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness."² Unless all these "giants" are attacked in a frontal manner, the root causes of social insecurity are not likely to be removed. The problem is, therefore, a vast and integrated one, but the main approach to social security on the practical side is to help the helpless in their hour of need and protect them from the ravages of misery and insecurity during those spells of calamity which are the constant lot of humankind. "In the life of man," states an I. L. O. publication, "there are two stages of dependency—childhood and old age - and in the intervening years of adult life there are likely to occur spells during which he cannot earn his living. Instinct sees directly to the rearing of children, but Nature's concern for other cases of dependency is less clear and more remote."³ It is here that the *raison d'être* of social security lies: for where Nature cannot function to the good of Man, it is for the social organism to intervene in his interests. The family, unit of social organisation, was the original cell of security "prototype and analogue of every future institution," but the boundaries of paternal responsibility for protection and preservation of the helpless are being constantly extended and the State, as well as some sort of an International Authority, is being steadily regarded as concerned with the provision of this security. / What are those main risks of insecurity to

¹ *Draft Report of the Social Security Committee (Commission to Study the Organisation of Peace)*, quoted J. B. Condliffe, *Agenda for a Post-war World*, pp. 97-98.

² *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*, p. 6

³ *Approaches to Social Security* (M. 18), p. 1

which human life is liable and in relation to which organised society can afford relief to the helpless individual? They are incidents of life occurring right from childhood and up to old age and death, and include mainly sickness, maternity, invalidity, accident and industrial disease, unemployment, old age, death of breadwinner, and burial and other emergencies. These risks affect the life not only of the breadwinner but also the lives of his dependants, and hence society now regards the whole family as the object of a security policy. The aim of such a policy is three-fold: Compensation, Restoration and Prevention. This general aim applies to the whole gamut of social security measures. Compensation goes to income security and is based upon the idea that during spells of risks, the individual and his family should not be subjected to a double calamity involving both destitution and loss of health, limb, life or work. Restoration implies cure of the sick and invalid, re-employment, and rehabilitation, and is, in some ways, an extension of the earlier concepts of the functions of social security. Prevention is designed to avoid the loss of productive capacity due to sickness, unemployment or invalidity and to render available the resources which are used up by avoidable disease and idleness and thus to increase the material, intellectual and moral well-being of the community.

Social security, thus, is the security that society furnishes through appropriate organisation, against certain risks to which its members are perennially exposed. It is the security of the masses among the society who cannot effectively provide by ability or foresight alone against the risks. The masses in any country consist of the low-paid labouring classes, whether they are industrial, semi-industrial, or agricultural, and whether they are self-employed or employed by others. But some sections of these are well-organised, compact and relatively better-off, while others are scattered, disconnected and impecunious. The methods appropriate to these two different categories, so far as social security is concerned, have, therefore, to be different. Accordingly, Social Security measures fall under two main heads: Social Insurance and Social Assistance. Social Insurance is generally adopted where the class of workers to be covered is sufficiently well-organised, legally regulated, and financially stable, and further "wherever there exists an apprehension

of exaggerated claims and conscienceless exploitation of a common fund, even if insurance means a somewhat less extensive coverage of the risk.”¹ Social Assistance, on the other hand, is more applicable where the workers to be covered are too poor to contribute, too illiterate to follow the technicalities of insurance, and too scattered to be brought under a proper scheme of insurance, and also where the spheres of service offer little occasion for abuse. In a properly organised social security system, comprehensiveness can be obtained by means of a well-co-ordinated complex of social insurance and social assistance schemes. It is difficult to say off-hand in which case insurance would be better than assistance or *vice versa*; the special conditions of every country and every class of workers therein must be considered specifically. The modern trend, however, undoubtedly is towards an integration of measures with a view to the fullest realisation of the idea of social solidarity, as may be seen from the Beveridge Plan in Britain, and the proposed plans of a similar character in other countries, particularly in South America, Canada, Australia and the United States, as also from the existing schemes of Denmark, Russia and New Zealand. In India, as will be seen later, we shall have to adopt the idea of such a co-ordinated programme of social security measures and step by step fill up the gaps in human happiness and social stability.

***The Need
for Social
Security
in India***

In view of the terrible poverty of the Indian masses, the wide prevalence of disease and epidemics, the high incidence of maternal and infantile mortality, the low expectation of life, and the misery and destitution caused by unemployment and underemployment as well as by hereditary indebtedness, the case for a programme of social security, whether it is based upon insurance or upon assistance, is so strong that it needs little proof or evidence.² The basic problems of poverty, ill-health, illiteracy and economic inefficiency will have to be tackled through appropriate agencies to be created under an all-India plan, but along with the multifarious programmes of nation-building, a programme of social security

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

² The following statistics would throw some light on the general economic and demographic situation in the country :—

The annual per capita income in rupees in India and some other countries is as follows: U. S. A., Rs. 1,406 ;

will lead the way to a new and better life for the masses of India. The ancient Indian society had developed its own buttresses of social security in the past: these were: (a) the self-sufficient village economy, (b) the caste system, (c) the joint family principle, and (d) charity. The self-sufficiency of the village has been broken down by the impact of modern trade and transport, and it no longer provides either security

Canada, Rs. 1,036; U. K., Rs. 980; Australia, Rs. 792; France, Rs. 621; Germany Rs. 603; Japan, Rs. 218; India, Rs. 65.

The health and vitality of the population can be gauged from the following figures:

	Birth and Death rates per 1000		Infant mortality Deaths under one year per 1000 Live births	Expecta- tion of life (in years)	
	Births	Deaths		Male	Female
Canada	20.3	9.6	61	58.96	60.73
U. S. A.	17.3	10.6	48	60.60	64.50
Germany	20.3	12.3	60	59.86	62.81
U. K.	15.3	12.2	53	60.18	64.40
Australia	17.7	9.9	38	63.48	67.14
Japan	27.0	17.6	114	46.92	49.63
India	33.0	21.8	167	26.91	26.56

"Preventable epidemic diseases such as small-pox, typhoid, dysenteries, cholera, are widespread. Out of 6,165,234 deaths in 1939, malaria accounted for 1,411,614, small-pox for 48,103, cholera for 97,566 and dysenteries and diarrhoeas for 269,300... The resistance of the population to disease is low." Grant, *The Health of India*, (Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs), p. 3.

The high incidence of maternal and infantile mortality can be seen from the following figures:

	Maternal deaths per 1000 births	Infantile mortality rate per 1000 live births
Cawnpore	8.9	301.0
Lucknow	7.3	212.2
Howrah	9.7	240.8
Calcutta	2.5	205.4
Nagpur	11.7	226.3
Jubbulpore	10.3	264.4
Akola	0.8	211.4
Bombay	4.1	212.2
Ahmedabad	7.5	267.4
Sholapur	5.4	186.7
Madras	7.4	241.6
BRITISH INDIA	...	198.6

Of the total infantile deaths, 47.3 per cent took place during the first month of life. Of the total mortality of all ages, 47.0 per cent occurred among children under 10. The rate of still births per mille of live births was 20.6 in 1939 (in Bengal it was 49.8).

of income or of employment. The inequalities and injustices of the caste system no longer conform to the liberal needs of the modern age, and the organised charity available under the caste system has now ceased to be a dominant force. Nor does the crumbling fabric of the joint family organisation provide safety and security to the destitute masses. Of the ancient remedies, therefore, private charity alone remains but this is so poor and ineffective in relation to the gargantuan problems of poverty and insecurity in India, that social security in the modern sense needs must come.

It has been stated that India is too poor and too undeveloped to have the luxury of social security. I may do no better than quote Sir William Beveridge on this question. In a recent broadcast discussion under the auspices of the B. B. C., Beveridge was asked whether India could afford a programme of social security. His answer was as follows:—

“Well, I am often asked whether Britain can afford the Beveridge Plan, and my reply is that this is a question with a catch in it, like the school-boy question ‘Have you left off beating your Mother?’ It assumes something that is not true; it assumes that wise distribution of your income costs anything. Now to my mind, it doesn't cost anything to distribute your income so that you spend it upon the more urgent things before you spend any of it on the less urgent things. That is merely wise spending. When people ask, can Britain afford the Beveridge scheme, it's like asking if a housewife can afford to buy bread for her family before she buys a radio. Of course, she can and should.”

Beveridge proceeded to say that “in a sense the poorer you are the more you need it (social security)—by maintaining your health, it will help you to increase productivity.”

It is, of course, true that in India to achieve freedom from want, it may be necessary to have a fundamental drive for planning and prosperity, but the lacunæ in the economic life of the people must be filled up by means of positive measures of social welfare, ranging from famine and

¹ “India and the Four Freedoms”—Fourth talk in B. B. C. Series, “Freedom from Want” (2)—Mr. Wickham Steed (in the chair), Sir William Beveridge and Sir Atul Chatterjee,—broadcast in November 1943.

unemployment relief, on the one hand, to health and unemployment insurance, on the other. I think this country can stand a considerable measure of redistribution of wealth for meeting the urgent needs of the more impecunious sections of the society. The phenomenon of inequality of the distribution of wealth is no new one here. For generations, if not centuries, the prevalence of landlordism and feudalism has stressed inequality; while in recent decades industrialisation has contributed its own quota to it too. The last great war and, to a far greater extent, the present one, have further aggravated the evils of inequality, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. A vast scope therefore exists for redistribution of wealth, whether through the agency of public finance (which can help social assistance schemes) or through that of social insurance. One cannot indeed be certain whether, in the present scheme of affairs, we can go ahead with a nation-wide programme of social security covering every individual on a uniform basis, but beginnings have to be made in various directions, dealing with different categories of labour in different ways. There is no doubt that these beginnings would ripen into full-fledged schemes as and when the general programme of economic planning succeeds in hitting its targets. Although, therefore, we cannot perhaps have one unified and comprehensive Beveridge plan for the Indian masses just at present, we can and should have a series of social security schemes designed for various categories of workers. These schemes can be later welded into a bigger and all-sided scheme applicable to the country as a whole.

Another supposed obstacle is stated to be the fact that the masses of Indian labour are agriculturists and that they are not quite amenable to social security measures. Now it is true that owing to the peculiar inheritance and land-tenure systems of this country, there has grown up a considerable section of the small land-owning labouring class, but at the same time, with the growth of population, the size of the landless proletariat has been increasing by leaps and by bounds. It is fallacious to suggest that the village economy of India could provide shelter and security to this proletariat which has become a great drag on the soil. By all means, we should plan agriculture and raise the productivity of the soil and thus seek to enrich those who are

dependent upon it. But it is wrong to imagine that we would be able to solve the problem of poverty and unemployment of the masses by merely pinning them down to agriculture and making it their "insurance." It is not often realised that while social insurance cannot be effectively applied to agricultural labour, measures of social assistance are and always can be more suitably adopted in its case. In India, in all probability, social assistance will have to be the main method of approach in the case of the agricultural masses. As regards the suggestion, on the other hand, that the masses in India have a bias for rural life and, owing to their migratory habits, are not a fit subject of social insurance with all its checks and balances, and that for this reason it is better to encourage their constant exodus to the village, the answer is simple. The Indian masses gravitate to Mother Earth and to the village, because the industrial town provides for them little or no security. The moment the industrial masses are provided with security of employment, income and housing, what appear to be the obstacles to the introduction of social insurance in industries would vanish into thin air. Along with them will also disappear a number of other difficulties faced by the industrial employers to-day, such as absenteeism, labour turnover and labour unrest.

Nor can the absence of voluntary schemes of social insurance or paucity of statistical data be regarded as real obstacles to our programme. Not in all countries where social insurance was introduced by legislation, did insurance institutions like the Friendly Societies of Great Britain pre-exist; and, in fact, if the Beveridge Report and the writings of several other authorities on British social insurance are any guide, the pre-existence of such institutions has not been an unmixed blessing. The absence of statistical data, again, has not stopped any country from adopting social insurance schemes; for to a large extent, social insurance statistics are a hen-and-egg puzzle. Unless you have social insurance you cannot have the right statistics, and in the absence of the right statistics, the impossible claim might be made that schemes of social insurance are not feasible. To quote Sir William Beveridge again, "You can only get statistics of sickness by having a health insurance scheme, just as you can get unemployment statistics by having unemployment insurance."¹

¹ In the B. B. C talk, mentioned above.

**The Begin-
nings of Social
Insurance in
India**

The beginnings of general labour legislation in India go back to the thirties of the last century, when, owing to the abolition of slavery, British colonial planters turned to India for cheap labour, and it became necessary to regulate the recruitment, forwarding and employment of Indian emigrants under the indenture system. Apart from this, however, there were two other forces responsible for progressive labour legislation in this country: *vis.*, firstly, the anxiety of influential Manchester men to see that factory conditions here were not an unfavourable factor in their competition with the Indian textile industry, and, secondly, the growing power of the trade union and labour movement. In spite of these divergent forces, however, labour legislation in India has confined itself mainly to measures of a basic character such as regulation of hours of work, working conditions, employment of women and children, trade unions and trade disputes, and payment of wages. These measures, whether in relation to factory industries or mines or plantations or other occupations, are *basic* in the sense that they do not deal with the problems of *insecurity* which arise sporadically in the life of a worker, but with the basic and perennial problems. The creation of the International Labour Organisation and the adoption by the International Labour Conference of a series of Draft Conventions and Recommendations have indeed given a new impetus to legislation. As a result, the Government of India have been able to ratify and apply nearly a score of International Labour Conventions as also to give suitable effect to a number of Recommendations. Broadly speaking, however, it still remains true that social security legislation as such has figured less conspicuously with only two items covered so far, *vis.*, Workmen's Compensation and Maternity Benefit, although Health Insurance has been under consideration for several years and is now being dealt with, with a view to a final scheme.¹ It is a characteristic feature of labour legislation in India enacted so far, that the State has largely played the part of mere legislator and has hardly interested itself in the prosecution of any security or welfare schemes, or financially participated in them. Even in regard to Workmen's Compensation and Maternity Benefit, the underlying principle

¹ See my *Report on Health Insurance* (1944). Apart from these there are also a few small private schemes for Provident Funds, Sickness Assistance and Maternity Benefit.

has been that of Employer's Liability. The consequences of this fact will be discussed presently. One helpful factor, however, emerges in this connection, and that is that the existence of a legal background of a *basic* character provides the foundations for the future social security legislation to build upon: for, the existing legal and administrative structure, however inadequate, is going to be of great assistance in the enforcement of future measures both directly and indirectly.

The Workmen's Compensation Act

Let us now consider the two types of social security measures so far legally adopted in India, *viz.*, Workmen's Compensation and Maternity Benefit. Workmen's Compensation for industrial accidents and for certain scheduled occupational diseases was introduced by the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, which was amended several times, in 1929, 1933, 1938, 1939 and 1942. The law is mainly based upon the British model and adopts the principle of employer's liability. The compensation is a lump-sum payment under a schedule which makes no allowance for the very divergent consequences which the same injuries or infirmities may have for persons of different ages and occupations. To arise out of employment, the accident must be sustained while the injured worker is engaged in doing something which it was his duty as part of employment to do, and the mere fact that a workman is injured while he is at work is not sufficient, even if he can show that the accident would not have taken place, if he had been elsewhere. In other words, as Sir A. G. Clow says,¹ the worker must show that the "accident has a casual and not merely a fortuitous relation with his employment." The term "accident" itself has gone through several interpretations, in the course of which the lawyers have indulged in the ancient pastime of drawing distinctions without differences. The legal confusions in India, on the whole, have followed those of the British model, which it must be remembered differs materially from similar measures in other countries. I am not quite sure that the British model has been either so faultless or successful that its almost verbatim imitation in this country was justified. No doubt the Act has been partially revised on the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Labour, yet in its practical operation, it has been far from satisfactory. The Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee (1940)

¹ *The Indian Workmen's Compensation Act*, p. 47.

made the following comment on the working of the Act: "While we are aware that there are employers who are giving to their employees the full benefit of the Act, our enquiries have painfully disclosed to us the fact that it is not enjoyed by the workers in many concerns. Many of the workers are not even aware of the existence of the Act and are content to accept as an act of compassion whatever may be offered to them by the employers."¹ Schedule III, appended to the Act, which gives a list of occupational diseases, together with the occupation which might cause them, is extremely narrow in its scope. In Britain, the original Act had only six items, but by the order of the Secretary of State, the list was later extended so as to cover 37 diseases². Here, however, apart from Anthrax, which is mentioned in Section 3 (2), the list included only six diseases, and although the Government of India has been empowered by the Act, to make further additions, few additions have in fact been made. Thus, in 1937, three diseases only were added by notification, namely, arsenical poisoning or its sequelæ, pathological manifestations due to radium or other radio-active substances and X-rays, and primary epitheliomatous cancer of the skin. The Royal Commission had admitted that industrial diseases might be "more common than is generally realised and more varied than Schedule III of the Act would suggest."³ Yet, mere extension of the Schedule would not be of much value, unless the worker succeeds in securing compensation and treatment. Actually, in practice "lead poisoning," mainly in the printing trade, is the only disease in respect of which complaints have been made with any degree of frequency or success; the rest of the Schedule has remained practically a dead letter.

The principal causes of the failure of the present method of dealing with accident and industrial disease through the Workmen's Compensation Act have been as follows: (i) In the first place, the worker's poverty, illiteracy and ignorance of the law constitute a great obstacle in the way of claims being either presented or pressed. He cannot be expected to go through the procedure of claiming and obtaining

¹ Report, pp. 152 ff.

² Cf. Sir Thomas Legge, *Industrial Maladies*, p. 18.

³ Report, p. 307.

✓ compensation, which is both costly and dilatory. Secondly, the ✓ cost of litigation are not only beyond the capacity of the worker, but also often not commensurate with the compensation obtained, while the compensation itself might be a speculative proposition. Thirdly, the injured worker runs ✓ the risk of losing his job on top of losing a limb, if he decides to fight a case or even serve a notice on the employer, and hence he has often to accept a much smaller amount than is legally due to him. Fourthly, there is the difficult question ✓ of legal aid to the claimant worker. No doubt public spirited lawyers in some towns, trade unions, and well-intentioned inspectors of factories have often taken interest in individual cases, but such cases are few and far between. In all probability, however, if the workers were given adequate legal aid, the extent of litigation would have been enormous. In the United Kingdom, an enormous amount of litigation takes place every year and a great deal of money is spent on legal and administrative expenses. The Holman Gregory Committee reported in 1920 that "during the last five years the employers had to pay £100 in premium (to insurance companies) for every £48 paid out in benefits to the injured workman."² We have no corresponding figures for India, but here probably the expenses of litigation and administration have been kept down not by economical methods or by reason of legislative perfection, but by suppression of facts and default. The principle of employers' liability has been largely at the bottom of the failure, for if the employer is saddled with the responsibility of compensation, he is bound to find ways of avoiding it. Apart from the fact that the Act has failed in its primary intention, *vis.*, compensation to the worker for loss of income due to temporary or permanent invalidity caused by accident or industrial disease, from the viewpoint of social security, it also ignores two other important aspects of the matter, *vis.*, restoration and rehabilitation. These are the new aspects of the question which have recently been stressed in discussions abroad. How best to provide for them and also how best to reorganise the machinery of workmen's compensation are questions which will be discussed presently.

¹ As Mr. B. Shiva Rao remarks (in his illuminating book, *The Industrial Worker in India*, p. 217), "beyond a point, it does not pay a worker in India to demand fulfilment of a legal right."

² Quoted, W. A. Robson (ed.) *Social Security*, p. 59.

Maternity Benefit Legislation

There is no all-India legislation on maternity benefits, although an abortive attempt was made in 1924 by a private member to propose this in the Central Legislative Assembly. The Legislation is mainly Provincial. The first Provincial Act was the Bombay Maternity Benefit Act of 1929 and this was followed by similar enactments in the Central Provinces (1930), Madras (1934), U. P. (1938), Bengal (1939), Punjab (1943) and Assam (1944). On the separation of Sind from Bombay, Sind re-adopted the Bombay Act in 1939. The Bombay Act was with modifications extended to Ajmer-Merwara (1932) and Delhi (1937). In 1941, a special Central Maternity Benefit Act was passed for Mines in India. In some of the Native States also, there are similar Acts which mainly follow the Provincial Acts with minor modifications.†

It would appear that maternity benefits are provided in almost all the major industrialised Provinces and States, although these are confined mainly to certain categories of

†The table below gives an idea as to the main provisions of the various Provincial measures:—

Provinces.	Year in which passed	Qualifying periods (months)	Maximum period for maternity benefits (weeks)	Rate of maternity benefits
Bombay* ...	1929	9	8	8 annas a day or average daily wages, whichever is less. But in the cities of Bombay and Ahmedabad 8 annas a day.
C. P. & Berar ...	1930	9	8	8 annas a day or average daily wages, whichever is less.
Madras ...	1934	240 days (8 months) with a period of 1 year.	7	8 annas a day.

* It is understood that for the duration of the war, the Mill-owners' Association, Bombay, and the Ahmedabad Millowners' Association have increased the rate to As 12 per day.

(From *Indian Labour Gazette*, May 1944, p. 287)

workers only. However, here again, as in the case of workmen's compensation, serious defects have crept in and also mainly because of making the employer responsible for payment of benefits. In the first place, the legislation is neither quite uniform nor universal, so that there are gaps here and there, which cannot be said to be fair to the workers. Secondly, only cash benefit is given at present, and there is no provision for medical benefit of any kind, (except of a very superficial kind in one Province) the worker being left to her own resources for this. Thirdly, as pointed out by the Bombay Textile Labour Enquiry Committee and the Coimbatore

Provinces	Year in which passed	Qualifying periods (months)	Maximum period for maternity benefits (weeks)	Rate of maternity benefit
U. P. ...	1938	6	8	8 annas a day or average daily wages, whichever is greater.
Bengal ...	1939	9	8	Do
Punjab ...	1943	9	60 days	12 annas a day.
Mines (under the Indian Mines Maternity Benefit Act)...	1941	6	8	8 annas a day.
Assam ...	1944	150 days	8	1. In plantations Re. 1 per week for the period before confinement and Re. 1.4.0 per week for the period after confinement, provided the total cash payment is Rs. 14. 2. In other employments Rs. 2 per week or average weekly wage or salary whichever is greater.

¹ Report, pp. 307-8.

Court of Enquiry,¹ evasion is widely prevalent in spite of certain provisions of the Acts meant to discourage it. Dismissal of the female worker at the first sign of pregnancy or threats of dismissal are not uncommon, and although there is quite a large number of employers who abide by the provisions of the Acts, there are opportunities for evasion. In some places, it appears maternity benefit legislation has had an adverse effect on the employment of female labour also. For all these reasons, I am of the opinion that maternity benefit in the future social security legislation must not be the liability of the employer alone, but that it must be made a part of a national, unified scheme of social insurance. This will be discussed presently.

The Risks of Insecurity

The contingencies or risks which should be covered by a programme of social security, either through insurance or assistance include all the principal occasions during which a worker is deprived of the opportunity to earn by old age, physical disability or unemployment, and also include the death of the breadwinner who leaves a dependent family. These risks are everywhere classified under the heads of (1) sickness, (2) invalidity, (3) maternity, (4) old age, (5) death of breadwinner, and (6) unemployment. Where sickness, invalidity or death are due to what may be termed "employment injuries," the State in most countries has developed a long-standing tradition of legislative practice of making the employer directly liable, and this has superseded court actions invoking the common law for injury due to negligence. In India, as elsewhere, this has manifested itself in the form of the Workmen's Compensation Law. But barring the maternity benefit measures mentioned in the previous section and some few voluntary schemes of sickness benefit and provident funds and gratuities, the day-to-day risks of sickness, invalidity, old age, and death have not so far been provided against in a comprehensive way. Moreover, it is no longer a question of merely providing *income* security or monetary compensation during the occurrence of these risks. The responsibility of the community, as stated earlier, goes further: it extends to Restoration as well as Prevention. The measures to be adopted, therefore, must meet the risks of insecurity on all these fronts, and must be

¹ Report, published in *Madras Labour*, July 1937—October 1938, pp. 259-61.

aimed not only at the immediate ideal of providing temporary relief to the worker but also at the ultimate one of raising his efficiency and general standard of life and thus enabling him to make his maximum contribution to the nation's wealth. Further, the measures to be adopted must suit the peculiar implications of the various contingencies, as regards the technique of contributions the extent of benefit and behaviour conditions. In the case of Indian labour, comprising numerous disparate categories of workers in industry, commerce and agriculture, moreover, the peculiar conditions of each type of labour and its requirements as regards provision of security will have to be taken into consideration.

***The Planning
of Social
Security***

As indicated earlier, in India the Social Security programme will have to consist of three parts: Social Insurance, Social Assistance¹ and Ancillary Measures. I think, broadly speaking, the method of insurance can be applied with safety in the case of all labour that is at present regulated or capable of being regulated with regard to working conditions, wages, tenure of employment, inspection etc. This condition is satisfied either fully or partially in the case of labour employed in factory industries, mining, plantations, transport

¹ The question might be raised here whether the entire gamut of social security problems might not be handled as in New Zealand, Russia and Australia, by means of social assistance on a non-contributory basis. The social security scheme in Russia applies to the entire employed class, but not to the collective farmers, who have their own mutual benefit societies. It contains several features of general interest such as the active participation of trade unions at all levels of administration, a single contribution by the employer, i. e., by the State itself, etc., which are bound up with the peculiar economic structure of the Soviet Union. New Zealand, and Australia also have created or are creating income security schemes (*vide* Report IV-1 of International Labour Conference, Philadelphia Session, entitled *Social Security: Principles, and Problems arising out of the War*, pp. 1-3) which diverge, by their greater emphasis on social assistance, from the common pattern followed in Europe and America. In New Zealand every resident must contribute 5 per cent of his income to the cost of the scheme by a special income-tax, failure to pay which may involve loss of cash benefit; while the cash benefits are fixed at a subsistence level and though subject to a means test have no direct relation to the number or rate of contributions paid. The scheme which Australia is developing is wholly non-contributory and is financed mainly from the general income-tax. Whether India should follow the example of these countries is an interesting point and will be discussed in a later section, dealing with the financing of social security.

services, port trusts, municipalities, building and construction, Government departments, and urban commercial concerns and shops. On the other hand, all labour employed in handicrafts, agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, forestry, etc., will have to be mainly covered by social assistance. A programme of social security implies that the ultimate targets in each case should be the provision of security in respect of all the risks which were mentioned in the previous section. But in India, it may be neither feasible nor necessary to go the wholehog immediately. We should attack the most urgent problems first, leaving the others for subsequent solution. Our programme of work thus must of necessity be gradual and steady in its development, if it is to be successful in its aims and financially stable and strong. The principal measures¹ which may be considered in connection with social insurance are: (1) Health Insurance, (2) Insurance against Industrial Disability, (3) Unemployment Insurance, (4) Maternity Insurance, (5) Old Age Pensions, Provident Funds, Gratuities and Endowment Insurance, (6) Widows' and Orphans' Pensions and Survivor's Insurance, (7) Invalidity Pensions, and (8) Funeral Benefit. Likewise, the principal measures, which might be adumbrated by social assistance, comprise: (1) Unemployment relief, (2) Medical assistance, including domiciliary and hospital treatment, maternity and child welfare, free sanatoria, leper asylums, etc., (3) maintenance of invalids and aged, and (4) general assistance. The programme, in either case, will have to be accompanied by positive measures of an ancillary character, designed not only to ameliorate the condition of the workers but also to keep down the incidence of the various risks with which we have to deal. These measures will include: (1) Training and rehabilitation, (2) public works and employment exchanges, (3) nutrition and housing reform, (4) prevention of disease and epidemics, (5) prevention of accidents, and (6) legislation relating to security of employment and wage fixation. Finally, these three parts of the programme, *vis.*, social insurance, social assistance and ancillary measures, need not be separated from each other in water-tight fashion. Administratively, as will be stated later, they should be as

¹ Family allowances, children's allowances, and grants to housewives, which figure in some foreign schemes, must be ruled out here, lest these aggravate the population problem of the country!

far as possible the concern of a single Department or Ministry. But even otherwise, there will have to be perforce a continuous interrelationship between the three, making it possible for workers, under varying circumstances, to avail themselves of them all with facility and convenience.

**Sickness,
Maternity
and Burial**

Of all the various measures which are urgently required here, health insurance and medical assistance are probably the most important. ¹ In spite of the activities of the public health departments in India, the provision of medical facilities is still very backward in relation to the total requirements of the population. In this field, a tremendous amount of work is yet to be done, and it is a happy augury that the recently constituted Health Survey, and Development Committee (under Sir Joseph Bhore's presidentship) have proposed a comprehensive programme of medical assistance for the masses of India. The finances of the programme also will probably be derived practically wholly from the public exchequer. In view of this, it might not be necessary to include therein any sickness *cash* benefit for the agricultural masses, for various reasons (which include possibilities of financial instability, difficulty of administering the cash benefit, etc.), and hence it can be obviously made a non-contributory affair, just what social assistance schemes are. On the other hand, the need for cash benefit is greater in the case of the industrial worker: for one thing, he does not enjoy the security which his home in the village provides, except by constant exodus there; for another, the cost of living in the town is higher and day-to-day life is impossible without some income security. The need for cash benefit being so pressing in the case of the urban, industrial worker, social insurance is better suited here. It is, therefore, appropriate that a health insurance scheme, the final result of a series of discussions spread over nearly two decades, is now forged in the Labour Department of the Government of India. The organisational problems of dovetailing this scheme into the bigger health programme for the country as

¹ Sir William Beveridge, questioned as to where he would make a beginning in applying social security in India, stated (in his B. B. C. talk): "On the whole, I think I would begin by applying social insurance in India where we began it in this country—to sickness, to providing income for sickness and treatment for sickness "

a whole will, of course, be there, but they are not so insuperably difficult.

The problem of health insurance and medical assistance is closely connected with those of maternity insurance and treatment and funeral benefit. In most countries, where there are schemes of health insurance, both maternity benefit and funeral benefit are incorporated into them. It would be convenient to make these benefits parts of the health insurance schemes in relation to such industrial and semi-industrial workers as are covered by it. For those who are outside the scope of health insurance, i.e., for the agricultural masses, maternity treatment only may be given as part of the general health programme, while funeral benefit (in the absence of a specific contribution by such workers) might be ignored, in view of the comparative convenience of funerals in villages.

**Industrial
ability**

Insurance against industrial disability, i.e., against accident and industrial disease, will be necessary for industrial and semi-industrial workers. At present, the Workmen's Compensation Act provides a coverage which appears to be inadequate and unreliable. I do not think that a mere overhauling of the Act will be of any use, for the fundamental defects, including excessive litigation, suppression of accidents, absence of medical treatment, and absence of any provision for rehabilitation, will still remain. A suggestion has been made, on the basis of certain foreign legislation, that the machinery of workmen's compensation might be made more effective by requiring employers to insure compulsorily with private insurance companies. In view of the facts, however, that insurance companies are often more ruthless litigants than even employers, that employers would still have an interest in suppressing accidents so as to get their premia reduced in subsequent years or to obtain rebates, and that insurance companies are not the most economical carriers for this form of insurance, we may be only perpetuating some of the worst evils of the workmen's compensation law which are found to be prevalent in India and abroad. In fact, in Britain, for the makers of the social security programme, it has been a great struggle against the vested interests of insurance companies and the ~~problem~~ there has been how best

and how quickly these vested interests could be wound up.¹ It would be topsyturvydom to suggest that in India we should create (or strengthen) such vested interests and then go through the same difficulties which Beveridge and others have been facing in Britain. Beveridge has beautifully summarised the main arguments against continuing the *status quo*.² These are: (1) that the present system rests in the last resort upon the threat or the practice of litigation; (2) that no machinery is provided for assisting the employee in presenting his claim; (3) that no complete security is afforded for the payment of compensation; (4) that the system fails to secure the maintenance of necessary income, as the lump-sum payment fails to provide any permanent source of income; (5) that the costs of administration are higher in relation to workmen's compensation than they need be or than they are in compulsory social insurance; (6) that the inclusion of certain industrial diseases makes the fixing of liability on employers particularly inappropriate, as the onset of disease is often gradual and an employee showing symptoms of an industrial disease may be discharged; and (7) that the present system has contributed little or nothing to the most important purpose of all, which should have come first, namely restoration of the injured employee to the greatest possible degree of production and earning as soon as possible. To remedy these defects, Beveridge proposes a special method of dealing with the problem of industrial disability. The remedy proposed is a brilliant one and at one stroke puts an end to all litigation, evasion and administrative confusion; for while it still recognises that the employer should be liable, especially in hazardous occupations, for payment of compensation, it abolishes the distinction between the accident which is covered by workmen's compensation and one which is not. Beveridge observes: "If a workman loses his leg in an accident, his needs are the same whether the accident occurred in a factory or in the street; if he is killed, the needs of his widow and other dependants are the same, however the death occurred. Acceptance of this argument and adoption of a flat rate of compensation for disability however caused would avoid the anomaly of treating equal needs differently and the

¹ See the *Beveridge Report*, pp. 35-48.

² Report, pp. 36-7.

administrative and legal difficulties of defining just what injuries were to be treated as arising out of and in the course of employment. Interpretation of these words has been a fruitful cause of disputes in the past; whatever words are chosen, difficulties and anomalies are bound to arise. A complete solution is to be found only in a completely unified scheme for disability without demarcation by the cause of disability." ¹ In accordance with this fundamental principle, he proposes a special provision for industrial disability. One part of the funds required for benefits, pensions and grants in respect of industrial accident and disease will be obtained as part of the weekly contribution to social insurance; another part will be obtained by a levy on employers in industries scheduled as being specially hazardous. This plan, as Beveridge rightly claims, introduces in a defined field the principle of "merit-rating" with the object of giving to employers a financial incentive for diminution of accidents and to the Ministry of Social Security a basis on which to press for preventive measures. In addition, Beveridge has proposed the creation of Statutory Associations of employers and workers in the scheduled industries for promotion of safety, rehabilitation and re-employment, collection of quotas of the levy on the industry, etc.

In this country also we might do well to adopt the principle of social insurance as modified by partial employer's liability as basic to the new arrangements. The arguments advanced by Beveridge in the case of the British system are applicable, *a fortiori*, in the Indian case. The substitution of compulsory *company* insurance will *not* remedy the evils at all. The only rational plan is to make workmen's compensation a part of a unified scheme of social insurance, or, if need be, in the beginning, a self-contained social insurance scheme covering all accident and industrial disease. We might also adopt the principle of scheduling hazardous industries according to the incidence of accident and industrial disease. In Britain, Beveridge suggests the scheduling of the following groups: mines, quarries, docks, shipping, constructional work and railways, as also some forms of factory work, such as woodwork, metal extraction, shipbuilding etc. What classes of industries should be scheduled in India is evidently a matter for detailed enquiry.

¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9; *et seq.*

Unemployment

The problem of unemployment in India is vast; in its extreme form it includes beggary and destitution. The question must, therefore, arise whether any measures of social security could cope with it in an unlimited manner. It is obvious that before the unemployment prevailing in the country can be dealt with in this way, steps must be taken to reduce it to a supportable size, i.e., in other words, the State must make a drive for employment of all the employables. This implies a plan for reconstruction of both industries and rural occupations with a view to full or maximum employment. Presumably such a plan can be regarded as implicitly complementary to social security, for in its absence social security on a nation-wide scale may well become a dream and a costly liability. In fact, unemployment insurance and relief, in regard to which the State would be bearing a substantial share of the financial cost, are themselves calculated to goad the State to adopt measures for the reduction of unemployment. It is in this spirit that the Philadelphia Recommendation insists on payment of unemployment benefit "until suitable employment is offered to the insured person." "The abolition of the time limit pledges the State to pursue a vigorous employment policy and establish a highly organised employment service."¹

Initially, however, and until an all-out drive for employment materialises, the scope of social security in dealing with unemployment might be restricted to certain less ambitious ideals, being extended gradually so as to cover wider spheres later on. In this connection, we might remember that Britain, which was the first country to adopt a major system of insurance against unemployment, made a beginning with a limited scheme applying to only seven industries and covering only 2,250,000 workers, while it was equally limited in its financial implications. The success or failure of even a limited scheme, however, will be no reflection upon the intrinsic soundness of its provisions or upon its future possibilities, but only upon the general employment policy of the country. After all neither unemployment insurance nor assistance is an actuarial proposition, implying any inherent financial balance present in it; on the contrary, it is largely

¹ I. L. O. Report IV (1)—Twentysixth Session—*Social Security*, p. 10.

an *economic* affair, the fortunes of which may depend upon the vagaries of trade cycles, localised depressions and miscalculations of economic policy. For this reason, therefore, the risk of unemployment is eminently a social liability and an appropriate object of a social security plan.

It is confidently hoped by economists as well as politicians that in the post-war world, which will have such a lot to do by way of reconstruction, there need be no trade cycles and such-like. It is a trite but commonsense proposition that if War could abolish unemployment in order to create wealth for the consumption of the engines of destruction, Peace could equally well attain the same end to create wealth for the consumption of the hungry millions of the world. If the peoples of the world have sense enough to act on this elementary idea, the problem of unemployment may assume insignificant proportions and may be easily manageable through insurance and assistance. But, in any case, if insurance is the method of dealing with unemployment, one need not be unduly frightened by the size of the unemployed population in India. *For, insurance would apply only to that section of the working population which was already employed and which had paid its contributions into the common fund; if from amongst this previously employed section any worker becomes unemployed, he alone will be entitled to unemployment benefit, provided he fulfils the necessary conditions, such as those relating to the minimum contributions, waiting period, maximum period of benefit etc.* Thus the liability of such an insurance fund is *not* unlimited. If, moreover, with regard to the insured group, the actual percentage of unemployment goes on progressively falling in relation to the assumed percentage, the fund is likely to have surpluses from year to year. For, it is not the absolute employment at any time, but the relative fluctuations in it which will be of consequence to the unemployment insurance fund, and the mass of permanently unemployed workers, like beggars, will not be covered.

Beyond this, however, the problem is of gargantuan proportions. It is impossible to provide for the vast mass of permanent unemployment or beggary, even on the basis of assistance, unless, of course, the State simultaneously undertakes a definite employment drive.

**Old age and
Invalidity**

These two risks can be conveniently considered together, as they have certain common features. In the first place, old age is, from the standpoint of social insurance, a sort of invalidity; socondly, if invalidity or unemployment comes during old age, it becomes almost indistinguishable from the latter in regard to its consequences; and thirdly, from the actuarial point of view, the provision for old age and that for invalidity are generally based upon the same principles of precalculation. In India, at present, we have no provision for either old age or invalidity for the large masses of workers. Only in certain forms of government, municipal and commercial services, there are schemes for old age pensions for both high-paid and low-paid servants. Also, in some concerns, there are schemes for provident fund or gratuity for workers. In India, owing to the extremely low expectation of life, most workers no doubt prefer provident funds to old age pensions, but owing to the absence of pensions a considerable number of workers have to linger on in employment and work beyond the normal age of physical efficiency. The need to which provident funds answer is different from the need which is met by old age pensions; provident funds are a form of investment, old age pensions are mainly insurance, in which the risks of some living up to a ripe old age are balanced against those of others dying early. Provident funds cannot be of much use where old age is long and irksome, as the lump sum amounts received are generally spent up soon. It is wrong to say, therefore, that if there are provident funds there is no case for old age pensions, for, the latter meet a special risk. Nor can it be said that because there are very few old men in the country, we need not bother about old age pensions; for, those few who live long must live well, and in any case, if the incidence of old age is small, the cost of old age pensions would be also very low. This, in fact, is a point in favour of old age pensions that, in India, owing to the low expectation of life, they are likely to be very cheap.

The minimum age at which old-age benefit may be claimed is fixed in most countries at 65 in the case of men and 60 in the case of women. In India, the age-limits might be fixed slightly lower, say, at 60 for men and 55 for women. The payment of benefit should be made conditional upon retirement from regular work in any gainful occupation, provided

of course that the basic benefit is sufficient for subsistence. This will also automatically fix the upper age limit for health insurance and invalidity pensions. As regards invalidity benefit, this should be paid from the date when sickness cash benefit ceases and for the whole duration of invalidity up to the age at which old age pensions would begin. But if the handicapped person is still in possession of sufficient strength and skill to do some work indicated to him, no benefit should be payable; also in certain cases, where a course of re-training is likely to make the insured fit for work, he should be given a temporary invalidity benefit. The cases of invalidity, like those of old age, are likely to be few in relation to the total number of the insured population, although the duration of benefit may be fairly lengthy in many cases. It is obvious, that both old age pensions and invalidity benefit could be applied to industrial and regulated labour only in the beginning. As regards the agricultural workers, workers subject to these contingencies will have to be covered by *general* assistance.

Death of Breadwinner

The contingency for which survivors' benefits are to be paid is the loss of support suffered by the dependants as the result of the death of their breadwinner. Provision against this can be made by means of (a) survivors' insurance, applicable to all dependants, (b) widows' and orphans' pensions, or (c) industrial life assurance. The scope of the first is widest and covers, in many countries, not only the widow and children, but dependent aged parents and even unmarried wives and illegitimate children. The need to provide for survivor dependants other than the widow and children arises "only because the scope of social insurance is still limited to sections of the working population," under which survivors may not be receiving benefits in virtue of their own insurance. In India, the scope being limited in the first instance and probably for a very long time, survivors' insurance is likely to be found preferable to widow's and orphans' pensions of a limited kind. Of course, under both types of insurance, the principal condition for receiving benefit would be that the recipient is not gainfully employed. The draft social security recommendation of the I.L. O. (Philadelphia Conference) mainly follows the Beveridge Report in proposing that a benefit should be paid to a childless widow "while she is rearranging her life and, in case she is seeking work

during her employment." In India, amongst the labouring classes in certain parts of the country extra-legal unions are very frequent. The Havana Conference of American States Members (1939) accepted the principle that in defining survivors, such unions should be recognised, and the recommendation endorses the view, suggesting that survivors' benefits should be paid to such wives, subject to previous registration as dependants. In the case of children, the age limit is fixed at 16, (18 in the case of a child continuing his general or vocational education).¹

Apart from survivors' insurance or widows' and orphans' pensions, in western countries, particularly in Britain, commercial insurance has developed its own method of dealing with the problem of death of the breadwinner. This method is Industrial Assurance. Originating from funeral benefit insurance, this has developed into life insurance for workers. Here obviously the *worker alone* pays contributions in the shape of premia of a minute size, pennies, half-pennies, threepence and so on, to collectors of insurance companies, and the method is *not* social but purely commercial insurance. In view of the devastating criticism by Beveridge in Appendix D of his Report of this type of private insurance, I do not see any use in encouraging it in this country. In Britain, the main task of Beveridge and his associates has been to devise the best means to *wind up* industrial assurance without rousing the opposition of powerful vested interests, and even while proposing an Industrial Assurance Board, of a tripartite character, he had to effect a compromise with the insurance companies. It is wrong to suppose, however, that in the absence of industrial assurance in Britain, anybody would have proposed that commercial insurance of this type should be newly started to cope with the problem of death of the breadwinner. So far as funeral benefit is concerned, it is now to be part of social insurance; that clips the wings of private companies substantially. For the rest, provision of widows' and orphans' pensions has already done away with the need of life insurance for the worker. Only business for "life of another" remains. In view of the high costs of administration of private industrial assurance, the heavy lapsation, and numerous other disadvantages attaching to it,

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 9 and 44.

particularly in a country like India, and in view of the availability of other superior alternatives like survivors' insurance (supported by a triple contribution and managed by a cheap, centralised machinery on a uniform basis), there is no reason why we should create new vested interests in this field and thus complicate our future social security programme. If there are already some private companies plying in this line they might be allowed to continue their business, but *no encouragement need be given by the State to them*. In fact, the experience of private companies in India in this field has been anything but happy and under the new Insurance Act several of them have collapsed ruining several thousands of poor families. If the experience of Britain is any guide, I do not imagine that the situation is likely to be any better here in the future.

Ancillary Measures

Amongst the ancillary measures which would be necessary to strengthen the programme of social security, probably legislation relating to security of employment and wage fixation is the most important. Security of employment for the individual worker is the basis of other security measures. In India, unfortunately, owing to imperfect labour organisation, the worker's right to work is not yet fully recognised; he can be dismissed lightheartedly any time under any pretext, whether the worker be permanent, temporary or *badli*. Of course, in certain industries, by agreement or by court decisions, Standing Orders have been adopted in this connection, providing a measure of employment security, but the large masses of workers can never be sure of their jobs. This is a matter, therefore, requiring urgent attention. Apart from this, if the worker is expected to make his contribution to social insurance and also if the incidence of disease and disability is to be kept down, he must be first assured of a reasonable income. This means that it will be necessary to have minimum-wage fixing machinery in each industry. For facilitating unemployment insurance, Employment Exchanges also will have to be created for all the types of workers to be covered by such insurance. It may be noted here that already Government of India have started employment exchanges in certain important cities for skilled and semi-skilled technical personnel. This machinery needs to be further expanded so as to cover all types of workers covered by unemployment insurance. Moreover, for obvious

reasons, at present the registration at the exchanges is voluntary for the worker, but when unemployment insurance is started, the registration will have to be compulsory. In addition to employment exchanges, unemployment insurance necessitates the establishment of centres for training and re-training of workers with a view to rehabilitation. This is necessary in order to minimise the burden on the fund and also to increase the industrial mobility of labour. Likewise, in India much of the misery of labour and its low standard of health are due to extremely bad conditions of housing. In the post-war period, more and more attention will no doubt be paid to this aspect of social security; for, better housing conditions will help to reduce the incidence of sickness and hence the burden on health insurance funds. Reform of the workers' nutrition is another kindred subject which requires immediate attention. Finally, appropriate steps will have to be taken to reduce the incidence of accident and disease by preventive and safety measures enforced rigorously through an efficient inspection staff.

**Financial
Organisation
of Social
Security**

In conformity with the universal trend in this regard, the financial organisation to be adopted in India should, I think, be *centralised* and *unified* in its character. Centralisation and unification are essential for reasons mainly of financial safety and soundness; for, the underlying principle of insurance is the "pooling of risks." As Beveridge so cogently puts it: --1

"There is here an issue of principle and practice on which strong arguments can be advanced on each side by reasonable men. But the general tendency of public opinion seems clear.....In accord with that view, the proposals of the Report mark another step forward to the development of State insurance as a new type of human institution, differing both from the former methods of preventing or alleviating distress and from voluntary insurance. The term 'social insurance' to describe this institution implies both that it is compulsory and that men stand together with their fellows."

Apart from the question of "pooling of risks," under a system of social insurance, the State will play a predominant

1 Report, p. 13.

part by way of financial participation, legislation and administrative regulation. This will involve major questions of policy affecting the various aspects of social security and its accompaniments, which can be best tackled in a co-ordinated manner. This means that Social Security must have a separate budget of its own. The purpose of social security budgeting is thus explained by an I. L. O. expert:—1

“Social budgeting sets forth the costs of a true social economy. These costs are not new but, in the main, take the place of former charges, which existed before the introduction of the social security programme and were a heavy and unregulated burden weighing, as chance dictated, on local authorities and benevolent institutions, private charity, or on the groups least able to bear them. This lack of system in the spreading of losses meant an unmeasured sacrifice of the physical strength and moral fibre of the nations and entailed losses which were aggravated by the vicious circle of sickness and destitution.”

The Inter-American Committee on Social Security (in their *Provisional Bulletin No. 3*) state:—

“Social security calls for its independent budget. A certain proportion of the national income is earmarked for the social security services, so that it can be counted upon for long-range planning. The distribution of expenditure over the different items is reviewed from time to time, and biostatistics show their comparative efficiency. Readjustments are made according to the dictates of a social strategy which directs the strongest pressure against poverty's key positions. The social security budget, explained by popular reports, makes evident to the contributor and the taxpayer just what is being done with his money and what returns in cash and kind are obtained. No matter how the budget is financed, by contributions or taxes, everyone must be made aware of the cost of social security and enabled to judge its worth.”

The financing of social security will consist of two parts mainly: the social insurance side, and the social assistance side. The former will be financed out of the funds

1 Oswald Stein, in an article, “Building Social Security” in the *International Labour Review*, September 1941, p. 250.

all these years. The suggestion does not, however, imply that in actuality, the power should be concentrated wholly in the hands of the Centre. In practice, it would be quite feasible to erect regional, provincial and local parts of the national machinery in which at various stages Provincial Governments (and Indian States) as well as local bodies are associated with the programme in various ways. In particular, it is necessary that the legislation should be made applicable uniformly throughout India. This question of uniformity is a vexed one. That differential conditions between Provinces and States in regard to labour are likely to hamper industrial development and also prove pernicious in their effect upon labour is undoubtedly true. The problem indeed goes beyond the immediate question of social security, but the future constitution makers would certainly have to face it in an iconoclastic spirit, if programmes like the present one are to have any chance of success.

Conclusion

To conclude, then, the programme of social security in India should be centralised in regard to administration and finance, gradual in its conception, compulsory, contributory (in a large measure), well-co-ordinated, and controlled and managed by the State in collaboration with the other parties *vis.*, employers and workers. A sound and well-integrated programme of social security will contribute much to ease the transition from war to peace economy, which is a slow process; what is more, it will prevent social disorder and social dissension by effecting an early and effective compromise between the apostles of self-interest and those of human rights. In doing this, it will harness and utilise the well-known techniques of insurance and assistance, which as Mr. Churchill once remarked, "bring the magic of averages to the rescue of millions."

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR INDIAN LABOUR

MAJ. E. LLOYD JONES, M.D., I.M.S.

Deputy Director General, Indian Medical Service

Maj. Jones speaks with authority on the subject as he has been actively associated with the preparatory work in connection with the Workmen's State Insurance Bill and being a doctor himself knows that the provision of an ample health cover to the Indian Labour is a gigantic task. He is deeply conscious of the defects in the Bill, but rightly feels that the main thing is a beginning where nothing existed before. It just touches the fringe of the problem but at the same time opens out an entrancing vista of social possibilities.

Introduction

HEALTH INSURANCE is an integral part of social insurance. In its narrower concept social insurance may be said to be insurance against social calamity as affecting the individual. Ill-health, incapacitating accident, unemployment, old age, and poverty, are evils which are capable of being combated by a scheme of insurance, in which contributions from individuals comprising a social or economic unit form a central fund, from which social calamities arising in individual contributors can be alleviated. In other words, the risk to individuals is spread among the constituent members of the social or economic group.

Social Insurance must be distinguished from mere social legislation. In India, as indeed in most other countries, social legislation preceded social insurance measures. The Workmen's Compensation Act, and the various Provincial Maternity Benefit Acts, may be cited as examples, but since these measures were based on definition of the responsibility of the employer towards his workers, they were not really measures of social insurance.

It is very doubtful whether, as some writers have suggested, compulsory insurance against sickness possesses the greatest social interest. For workers in India sickness is probably not the greatest economic risk. That doubtful honour must be assigned to poverty due to the imperfect economic development of the country, and resultant lack of remunerative employment. Insurance against sickness, however, is capable of more clear cut methods of application, and health insurance is, therefore the easiest aspect of social insurance to apply, particularly in a country the economic and social development of which is rudimentary. For this reason, health insurance has been the first stage of social insurance in most countries, and in this respect India has been no exception.

Historical

The initial spark of health insurance appeared in India in 1927. In that year certain recommendations of the International Labour Office were considered by the Government of India, and attention was directed to the possibility of applying the principles of social insurance to sickness, that

is, to providing workers with an income during periods of non-earning due to illness, and to providing free medical treatment to sick insured persons. For various reasons, into which it is not necessary to enquire here, the Government decided that a health insurance scheme was not possible in the conditions then obtaining in India.

In 1930-31 the Royal Commission of Labour made out a strong case for health insurance in India, and outlined a scheme. Preliminary enquiries were made, but eventually, as there seemed to be a lack of expressed demand, the matter was allowed to lapse.

By 1940 interest in the subject had become revived, and at the First Conference of Labour Ministers it was decided to obtain the views of Provincial Governments, and of employers and workers Associations. The result of this enquiry was that all the parties concerned accepted the principle of sickness insurance, to be financed by compulsory contributions.

By 1942 the rather nebulous ideas which had obtained heretofore had become more crystallised. At the Third Conference of Labour Ministers a tentative scheme was submitted by the Government of India to serve as a basis of discussion, and it was agreed that a draft sickness insurance scheme should be prepared to apply to workers in the cotton, jute, and heavy engineering industries.

**Professor
Adarkar's
Report**

Following this Conference the Government of India appointed Professor B. P. Adarkar to prepare a report on a scheme of health insurance for Indian industrial workers. Professor Adarkar's Report was published in August, 1944, and with its publication the institution of a health insurance scheme in India was placed on a much more solid foundation. The report deals very comprehensively with the implications of health insurance in India, and is one of the most significant publications dealing with social measures in India which has yet been published.

A Bill is born

The report has formed the basis of developments in health insurance in India up to date, which culminated in the publication of the Workmen's State Insurance Bill, which was submitted to the Legislature in November, 1946. In the

preparation of this Bill, the suggestions of Professor Adarkar were adopted in the main, although there have been various additions and amendments to his original proposals. The most important of the amendments has been in the classes of workers for whom cover was proposed. The original intention of restricting the scheme to workers in the three industries of cotton, jute, and heavy engineering has been abandoned, and the scope of the proposed legislation enlarged by including all workers in perennial factories in India.

A very important feature of the proposed legislation is the inclusion of cover against sickness and accident arising as a result of and in the course of employment, to be met from the Central Insurance Fund instead of being paid by individual employers as previously.

Various other important decisions have been taken since Professor Adarkar submitted his original proposals. Perhaps, the most important single decision was with regard to the inclusion for benefit of workers who develop tuberculosis. This question was raised in a note on Professor Adarkar's Report prepared by Messrs. M. Stack and R. Rao of the International Labour Office, in which it was suggested that among the risks covered should be "sickness (excluding tuberculosis)". This suggestion was strenuously contested by the present writer. It was agreed that the inclusion of tuberculosis, and indeed any other chronic diseases, would adversely affect the available fund, but it was stressed that the exclusion of any specific disease was completely at variance with the general principles of health insurance, and that a sickness insurance scheme which did not cover tuberculosis, especially in a country where tuberculosis in industrial areas is a special problem, would be a mere travesty. If restriction of the scope of the scheme were necessitated for financial reasons, such restriction should be made by limiting the benefits as a whole, and not by excluding specific diseases. The view was ultimately accepted by the Government of India, and the present Bill covers all forms of sickness.

**Insurance for
Indian
Seaman**

Apart from the Workmen's State Insurance Bill, work has been carried out with the object of instituting a scheme of social insurance for Indian Seamen, which would include

health insurance. A report on the subject was originally prepared by Professor Adarkar, and in December 1945 a joint Report on a Scheme of Social Insurance for Indian Seafarers was submitted to the Government of India by Professor Adarkar and Dr. Laura Bodmer of the International Labour Office. The scheme is a comprehensive one—the proposed benefits comprising medical care, and various cash benefits in case of employment injury, sickness, death resulting from employment injury, unemployment, old age, and death not resulting from employment injury. The scheme is still under consideration, and no Bill has yet been submitted to the Legislature.

The Workmen's Insurance Bill

The Workmen's State Insurance Bill, which is at present before the Legislature, aims at providing a scheme of health insurance for about 2½ million workers in perennial factories in India. The scheme, which is a compulsory and contributory one will be administered by a Central Board, and will be financed from a Central Insurance Fund to be built up out of contributions by employers, workers, and the Central and Provincial Governments.

The scheme proposes that the Central Board should take over the present Workmen's Compensation Act so far as compensation for workers injured in the course of their employment, or suffering from scheduled industrial diseases is concerned. That is, in the case of employment injury etc., the worker will claim compensation from the insurance fund, instead of from his employer as previously. The amount of the employer's share of the weekly contribution has been fixed accordingly.

State Contribution

The final apportionment of contributions from the Central Government and Provincial Governments has yet to be decided by negotiation, but the tentative ratio of apportionment of contributions to the fund is approximately as follows :—

Employers	51 per cent
Workers	27 per cent
Provincial Governments	14 per cent
Central Government	8 per cent

It will be observed that the total contribution from State funds is about 22 per cent which is about the same as the

contribution from State funds to the National Health Insurance Fund in the United Kingdom.

**Employer's
and Workers'
Weekly
Contributions**

The weekly contributions to be paid by employers and workers are shown below.

Group of workmen	Workmen's contribution (recoverable from workmen)	Employer's contribution	Total contribution (workmen's and employer's contribution)
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
1 Workmen whose average daily wages are below 10 annas ...	Nil	0 5 6	0 5 6
2 Workmen whose average daily wages are 10 as. and above but below Re. 1/- ...	0 1 0	0 6 0	0 7 0
3 Workmen whose average daily wages are Re. 1/- and above but below Rs. 1/8/- ...	0 2 0	0 7 0	0 9 0
4 Workmen whose average daily wages are Rs. 1/8 and above but below Rs. 2/- ...	0 4 0	0 8 0	0 12 0
5 Workmen whose average daily wages are Rs. 2 and above but below Rs. 3/- ...	0 6 0	0 12 0	1 2 0
6 Workmen whose average daily wages are Rs. 2/- and above but below Rs. 3/- ...	0 8 0	1 0 0	1 8 0

It will be observed that contributions are graded in six groups according to the average daily wage of the workers concerned. This will probably lead to some practical difficulties in administration. In the United Kingdom the workers' contribution does not vary with earnings and this makes the problem of collection of contributions much easier. In India, however, the normal wage rates are so low that to fix a single rate of contribution would be impracticable, since workers in the lower wage groups would be unable to pay a contribution large enough to ensure the financial

stability of the fund as a whole. There, therefore, seemed no alternative to making the contribution variable, and to weight the contribution in those wage groups from which higher contributions were possible. The same principle has been followed in fixing the employers' contribution. It will be seen that workers in receipt of a daily wage of less than 10 annas will pay nothing.

The principle of varying rates has also been applied to the payment of sickness cash benefit, which will bear a fixed relation to the normal earnings of the insured person.

Benefits

The following benefits will be available for insured persons :—sickness cash benefit; maternity benefit; medical benefit; and disablement benefit.

Sickness Cash Benefit

Provided not less than 17 weekly contributions have been paid during the period of 6 months preceding the claim a workman certified sick and incapable of work will receive approximately half his normal wages for 8 weeks in any continuous period of 12 months. No sickness cash benefit will be paid during an initial waiting period of three days. During treatment as an in-patient in a hospital sickness cash benefit will be reduced by half, but will not be less than 4 annas per day.

Maternity Benefit

Provided a woman worker has paid not less than 26 weekly contributions during a continuous period of 12 months immediately preceding the week in which she is confined, or in which she gives notice of pregnancy, she will be eligible for maternity benefit at the rate of 12 annas per day for 12 weeks, of which not more than 6 weeks, can be claimed before confinement. Confinement is defined as "labour resulting in the issue of a living child, or labour after 23 weeks of pregnancy resulting in the issue of a child whether alive or dead".

Medical Benefit

Responsibility for the actual provision of medical benefit is placed upon the Provincial Governments. The benefit will consist of medical care and treatment, with free provision of the necessary drugs etc., and will be available either in the form of visits to the home of the insured person, or by way of out-patient treatment at a hospital or dispensary, or as an in-patient in a recognised hospital. In-patient treatment

will only be provided for insured persons who are entitled to sickness cash benefit. Home or out-patient treatment, however, will be provided so long as the worker continues to be insured, and for three months after.

***Disablement
Benefit***

This is only payable in case of employment injury or incapacity due to scheduled industrial disease. In general, it consists of half pay for the period of disability and certain compensation to relatives in case of death.

***Machinery
for the Pro-
vision of
Medical
Benefit***

Since the greater part of the cost of the health insurance services will be met from individual contributions, insured persons and employers will certainly expect treatment on a higher level than the dispensary treatment at present provided for the mass of the population.

The corner-stone of the provision of medical benefit will be the insurance dispensary. In areas where there is a large insured population it is hoped to set up special dispensaries which will be staffed by full-time insurance medical officers, each of whom will be responsible for the treatment of not more than 2000 insured persons. It is anticipated that this will mean that no doctor will have to see and treat more than 60 patients a day, which should ensure that he will be able to devote sufficient time to each patient to make a proper clinical examination.

After a little time each insurance doctor should become familiar with his group of patients as individuals. This means that if the possibilities of the scheme are exploited to the full, the doctors will be in a position to advise their patients with regard to their health, instead of merely treating their diseases as they arise. The significance of this can hardly be over-estimated ; in fact, it would probably be no exaggeration to say that it marks the inauguration of an entirely new concept of medical care so far as India is concerned.

Special hospitals for the in-patient treatment of insured persons will probably not be possible in the initial stages of the working of the scheme, nor indeed would they be advisable. It is hoped, however, that from the outset Provincial medical authorities will be able to accord some degree of priority of admission to insured persons. As the

Provincial hospital services develop in accordance with their post-war planning, and more hospital beds become available, it should become possible to ensure that insured persons will be able to gain admission to hospital whenever their clinical condition demands it.

**Statistics and
Recording of
Sickness**

The keeping of clinical records of sickness, and the preparation of proper statistics, has hitherto been almost unknown in Indian industrial practice. The lack of accurate information with regard to sickness incidence in Indian industry was one of the major difficulties in fixing the amount of contributions, and the rates of cash benefits under the scheme. Special attention has therefore been devoted to the maintenance of records of sickness incidence.

It is considered that the best way of maintaining clinical records would be by a system of medical record envelopes containing consecutive medical record cards for each insured person. In this way, a permanent record of the health of each individual insured person will always be available for the guidance of his doctor. The same card can be used to furnish statistics of the health of the insured population. For the latter purpose it is proposed that in addition to the diagnosis, the insurance doctor shall be responsible for entering on the card at the time of treatment a group classification of diagnosis. For this purpose it has been necessary to devise a system of classification of diseases which will be suitable for the purpose, and which whilst capable of being maintained by relatively unskilled and untrained persons, will give sufficient information with regard to the prevalent conditions in any insurance area to permit of a more detailed investigation if deemed necessary. A classification of diseases into 19 main groups has therefore been devised, and it is believed that by this method each insurance dispensary will be able to furnish a quarterly statement of the number of working days lost in each disease classification group.¹

The possibility of a more elaborate classification, for the preparation of which medical record cards would be

¹ For further information see *Indian Medical Gazette Vol. LXXXII, No. 2 page 88-91. "Sickness Absenteeism and recording in Indian Industrial Establishments" by E. Lloyd Jones, M.D., (Vict.), Major, I.M.S. (E.C).*

forwarded to the Centre for complete statistical analysis, has been examined, but it has been concluded that such a statistical procedure, whilst no doubt of great value, is beyond the realm of practicability in the present stage of development.

The information which will be available under the present proposal will be sufficient to give a general indication of health conditions in any given area, and it is envisaged that in areas showing a high incidence of any particular group of diseases, it will be possible to send special investigators to examine the facts in greater detail on the actual ground.

**Limitations of
the Work-
men's State
Insurance Bill**

Although the Workmen's State Insurance Bill is well conceived, and when it is put into operation will mark a great advance in social legislation in India, it has many defects and limitations, which are fully appreciated by those who were responsible for its preparation, but which in the present rudimentary stage of economic development in India, are probably unavoidable.

The most obvious weakness of the Bill is that it caters for such a small proportion of the population. It is true that other measures for the betterment of the health of other sections of the industrial working population are either in operation or are contemplated, such as for example the Coal Mines Welfare Scheme, which is providing medical care, improved housing, and other social measures, from a fund derived from a cess on coal output.} Proposals for legislation to standardise medical care on tea plantations are also well advanced. But all these measures will not affect more than say 2 per cent of the total population of India.

Closely allied with this defect is the fact that the proposed scheme makes no provision for the medical care of the families of insured persons. Only the workers themselves will benefit directly. It is thus apparent that the scheme is one which is very limited in its application.

Another grave weakness is that cover for sickness cash benefit ceases after 8 weeks, even if the insured person is in full benefit at the time of making the initial claim. This means that the cover afforded against any complaint which is likely to be long-standing is very limited indeed.

Even so far as the benefits actually proposed go there are weaknesses. There is no provision for convalescent home

benefit, dental benefit, or sanatorium benefit for insured persons who develop tuberculosis. Indoor hospital treatment is included as a benefit under the scheme, but the existing facilities for indoor hospital treatment are very defective. Provincial hospitals are inadequate to meet the needs of the population, and it is doubtful if the funds available under the scheme will be sufficient to cope with any large scale schemes of hospital building and development.

Conclusion

These limitations of the Workmen's State Insurance Bill are not mentioned in any spirit of carping criticism. The Government of India were placed in a very difficult dilemma. Whether to embark on an extensive and comprehensive scheme in which the possibility of failure would be ever present, or whether to embark on a scheme limited in scope and application, which would be fairly certain of success, and which would be capable of enlargement both in scope of benefits, and in the mass of population to whom those benefits would be afforded. They have chosen the second of the two alternatives and it seems indisputable that their decision has been a wise one. The present scheme limited in scope as it is, is a well defined and well conceived entity, which is certainly capable of early fulfilment, and which is also capable of unlimited expansion as the financial stability of the initial portion of the project becomes assured.

FULLER EMPLOYMENT AND HIGHER LIVING STANDARDS

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When everybody talks, rather glibly, of "INDUSTRIALISATION" and many politicians and political ideologists project industrialisation as the one instrument of the millennium they promise for the benefit of the underfed masses—it is just round the corner, you see—it does one good to have some home-truths, by way of prophylaxis, from an economist of standing.

Professor P. J. Thomas tells us that the feasibility of rapid industrialisation is rather exaggerated, that industrialisation, without a broad-based economic reconditioning is not an unmixed blessing, that mechanisation is only possible in a "limited sphere and at a discriminatory

pace," that low living standards depress the internal market, that decentralisation is not only possible but essential, that free India has to bank not solely on industrialisation but agricultural development and expansion of tertiary services and that India's problem is not one of "Full Employment" as it is understood in the West but of "Fuller Employment" and greater productivity leading to "Higher Living Standards". It is refreshing to be told all this, specially when it is realised, as Professor Thomas has indicated, that an economically depressed India depresses the world.

THE most urgent problem of free India is to improve the economic well-being of the poverty-stricken masses of this country. The common man in India is not hankering after high living standards; he is only striving for meeting his bare physical needs regarding food, clothing and house-room. If these needs are not soon met, there may be disillusionment and worse consequences may follow.

***Employment
the crux***

Employment is the crux of this economic problem. For attaining reasonable living standards, steady incomes are needed, and incomes have to be earned by employment. Viewed from another angle, in order that reasonable living standards may be attained, much more of goods and services are essential. These must be provided by internal production or imports. In either case, therefore, employment is the prime factor.

***Under Pro-
duction and
low living
standards***

The actual position in India bears this out. Today, we produce, in India, only a fraction of the total quantity of goods required for maintaining reasonable standards of living. The explanation is not far to seek. Equally meagre is the employment available, both in quantity and quality. As is well known, large numbers of people in the country are unemployed and much larger numbers under-employed. Especially in rural areas most agricultural workers have no regular employment for many months in the year, as many as five or six months in some tracts. According to one estimate there are 40 million people unemployed in India. This is merely an over-estimate if we take note of the fully unemployed; it can only be an under-estimate if the inadequately employed are also included. Whatever it be, it is certain that a great deal of labour is remaining unemployed and thus wasted. An equally important factor is that even when fully employed, workers are unable to earn adequate incomes as the productivity of their labour is rather low. In this way, we have in this country inadequate incomes and miserable living standards. India is not deficient in material resources; but only if those are worked up effectively could production and income be adequate. This has not been the case, and consequently under-production and low standards of living have been the result.

Is Full Employment the Remedy?

What is the way out? We want much fuller (and more productive) employment and larger production: both really come to the same thing. 'Full employment', a term familiar in the West, has sometimes been suggested as the remedy for the state of things above described. But this term must be used cautiously, because in the economist's jargon it means the ironing out of cyclical fluctuations in employment. Unemployment in the industrialised Western countries is largely a cyclical phenomenon, i.e. it arises during the downswing of the trade cycle when production and demand fall away. Lord Keynes introduced the idea of counteracting such cyclical trends by the timely use of investment. In this way, a state of full employment is sought to be created by the deliberate action of the public authority. The conditions in India are not analogous. In recent years, it is true, India has also been affected by the cyclical trends of the West; we, too, went through unprecedented depression in the early 'thirties. But our major problem is not such cyclical unemployment, but a chronic unemployment resulting from a persistently low level of economic activity. This malady must be tackled in quite a different way, i.e. by creating fresh employment, and thus making employment more productive. Absolute increase of employment is necessary in our case, and not giving work to those temporarily unemployed. We may describe our problem as one of fuller and more productive employment.

India has to evolve her own technique

The difference noted above is not merely in name but in stark realities. In the highly industrialised Western countries the apparatus of production is such as to normally employ all the available labour. But at times, due to instabilities in demand and other factors, production falls off, and with it employment, too. If the fall in demand can somehow be counteracted, say by public works activity by Government and by other bodies, the demand and thereby production can be maintained. But in India unemployment has been perennial, because there is even normally no adequate work for the adults of most rural tracts, and even in the more favoured tracts, only in special seasons is there adequate employment. Therefore, new equipment has to be created whether in industry or improved agriculture, so that fuller employment may be provided. This would not only require a considerable amount of capital goods but also

more extensive markets within the country or outside, so that goods produced may be disposed of at a reasonable price. In other words, organised activity of a pioneering character has to be set on foot if the chronic unemployment of rural areas is to be effectively remedied. The technique for this has to be fundamentally different from that employed against cyclical unemployment.

Fuller employment and greater productivity

It is also necessary to clarify another important point. If the raising of living standards is the objective, it is not enough to see that labour is fully employed, it is also necessary that the employment provided should be such as to lead to an adequate product per head, whether in goods or services so that the worker may have adequate real income, i.e. enough of goods and services, to make up a reasonable living standard. This depends on the efficiency of the labour provided, i.e. the nature of the technique used. Plying a bullock cart, or spinning on charka or weaving on the handloom may give employment for the whole year round and yet the product resulting from such labour may be so inadequate that worker's living standard has to be low in spite of his hard labour for long hours. On the other hand by plying a lorry, by using a spinning machine, by weaving on a powerloom, the product can be considerably increased. This will not only lead to an abundance of goods for consumption in the country, but also ensure a higher living standard for the worker himself. Thus, while in India and China a cultivator or weaver has to work hard for long hours to eke out a bare subsistence, the farm worker and mill operative in America or even Japan are able to earn enough for a good living standard by doing comparatively easy work for a few hours a day. Therefore full employment on a crude production technique will not solve the problem of raising living standards in India. Employment has to be not only fuller but more productive.

Obstacles to Rapid Industrialization

Pursuing the above line of reasoning, and enchanted by the prospect of immediately raising living standards rapid industrialization has been urged for India, almost as a panacea for all her economic ills. But there are serious obstacles to industrialization proceeding at a rapid pace. And if by some clever action industrialization can be quickened, it will not solve the problem of unemployment, instead it may aggravate it, at least for a time.

Till lately the feasibility of rapid industrialization was taken for granted, because India's resources were rather over-estimated and exaggerated importance was given to India's large labour force and wide potential markets within the country. But lately after some practical experience, and, especially, as a result of many industrialists going abroad, better sense has dawned. The fact is that before 1942, our industrialists were interested chiefly in producing the consumption goods which used to be largely imported formerly. We have not taken the trouble to build up the basic industries essential for general industrial advance and the technical skill necessary for complicated industrial processes. Even in America with its vast resources, it took a long time to build up the "know-how" essential for the more advanced types of production. In many ways, difficulties are greater now than before the war. The more intricate types of machinery, which have to be imported, cannot be obtained immediately owing to the dearth of such capital goods all the world over. The simpler machine tools can indeed be made in India, but it would be many years before this country will be in a position to manufacture the more complicated machine tools.

Low living standards mean a limited internal market

India has indeed large resources, but to say that they are abundant, having regard to our large population, is rather an exaggeration. As for the largeness of the internal market, it can only be a delusion for a good long time to come, seeing that the actual demand for goods will for long be limited by the persistently low living standards of the masses. In Western countries workers have long been accustomed to fairly high living standards, and once the income is provided living standards are maintained. In India, experience shows that merely by providing an income living standards will not rise; the income may be wasted in various ways, and may not raise the living standards of the workers.

Further, to assume that workers' income would increase tremendously by industrialization is too optimistic. Incomes flow from employment. If industry could absorb large numbers of the under-employed workers, who now obtain meagre incomes, things may be all right. But the rapid introduction of mechanized methods in a country like India may increase unemployment rather than diminish it. The

significance of this point is not often appreciated, and it calls for some notice.

Industrialization does not mean employment for all

An essential characteristic of modern mechanized industry is the meagre demand for labour which it creates. Mass production needs much capital but little human labour. In the U.S.A. manufacturing production increased approximately fifteen times between 1870 and 1938, but the number of wage earners rose only 4 to 5 times and man-hours only 2 to 3 times. In India too, if industrialization is pursued on up-to-date technical methods, the net addition to employment cannot be large. All our heavy industries together may not require more than 500,000 labourers for some time to come. India needs machine tools and road rollers; but they can be manufactured by a few hundred skilled technicians. The large quantities of fertilizers required for the extensive agricultural acreage of India can be produced by employing about 2000 workers.

Actual experience in India, in recent years, confirms this view; India has succeeded in producing in her mills nearly all the cotton textiles which formerly figured as the biggest item in her imports. This has given employment to about 500,000 workers in textile mills; but at the same time this has caused serious unemployment and misery among the 6,000,000 handloom workers and the much larger number of spinners. Although India had even before the war succeeded in producing at home nearly all her textiles, iron and steel, sugar, etc., hardly 2 million workers had found employment in organized industry. At this rate, we may need only about 3 million workers to produce all our requirements of capital and consumption goods, and even this number will be much too superfluous if our production per man-hour attains to anything like the American or even the Japanese level. But India has over 13 millions of handicrafts-workers to provide for, not to speak of the tens of millions of idle rural workers sought to be diverted into industry. If, similarly, Indian agriculture also is placed on a technically efficient basis the demand for rural workers will greatly fall and thus unemployment on a colossal scale may result.

What is the way out?

It is perhaps the employment-killing aspect of mechanized industry that has given support to the Gandhian plan of eschewing all machinery and sticking to handicrafts. No

doubt, something like full employment can be attained in this way, but it will not enable us to expand production adequately, nor maintain living standards at tolerable levels. It will also produce hard muscular strain for men and drudgery for women, and miserable living conditions for both. Our aim must be to utilise machinery for maximising production, but at the same time provide for the fullest employment of workers. This aim has greatly been achieved in the industrialized Western countries. Let us see how.

**Tertiary
Occupations:
Principal
source of
Employment**

There is a wrong idea prevalent that industry is the main source of employment in advanced countries. This is absolutely untrue as can be seen from the following table, which groups workers under primary (agricultural), secondary (industry and mining) and tertiary (trade, transport and services) workers:

*Proportion of Different Classes of Employment
in certain countries*

	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>Tertiary</i>
U.K. (1936)	... 4.9	42.0	53.1
U.S.A. (1937)	... 25.4	28.8	45.8
France (1934)	... 24.5	40.0	35.5
Japan (1930)	... 50.3	19.7	30.0
India (1931)	... 72.0	15.0	13.0

It may be seen from the above table that the proportion of workers engaged in industry is small in most advanced countries (42% including building—in the U.K., and 28.8% in the U.S.A.). Much larger proportions of workers are engaged in tertiary occupations like trade, transport and other services. The proportion is as high as 54% in the United Kingdom. In the U.S.A. the proportion was 46% in 1931, and rose to 53% in 1941. (In advanced parts of the U.S.A.—e.g. California—the proportion is above 60%). It is also significant that while the proportion of workers engaged in Agriculture and even industry has been steadily falling, the proportion of those engaged in trade, transport and various services has been increasing. Thus in Japan only 10% of the workers in 1872 were engaged in tertiary occupations. But by 1930 the proportion rose to 30%. Even in the U.S.A. only 30% of the workers were engaged in tertiary occupations in 1900, but by 1930 the proportion rose to 45% and by 1941 to 54%.

***This way lies
a solution***

Let it be remembered that a rise in the standard of living inevitably means an increase in the proportion of workers in trade, transport and in various service industries. If we must have a varied diet, tidy clothes and clean house room, we require a large variety of goods and services—goods coming from industries, and services from transport and trade agencies and from various service industries like repairing, laundering, etc. We may not go to the extent of the Americans who leave even shoe cleaning to the shoe shine shop at the street corner. But if the raising of the living standard of the masses is our aim, this cannot be done without a tremendous increase in services as well as goods. This is unavoidable for a thickly populated country like India. Only a small proportion of our large population can be maintained by industry. The introduction of efficient methods in agriculture is bound to make a large number of the present agricultural workers also redundant. As already shown all these workers cannot be absorbed in industry, assuming that it is largely mechanized. How then could we employ them gainfully except by giving them opportunities to serve the community as transport workers and shop-keepers, teachers and technicians, doctors and nurses, musicians and entertainers, caterers and launderers and repairing workers of all kinds. This is not merely to create more work but to render to the community services which are essentially required if living standards are to be raised.

One special feature recommending service industries is that they are best pursued in small units and therefore could absorb large numbers of workers all over the country. They cannot be, need not be, concentrated, unlike manufacturing industries. Moreover, in service industries, large numbers of persons can employ themselves gainfully in an independent capacity without raising problems of wages and urban over-crowding.

***Tertiary
Occupations
in India, a
meagre
source:
Bombay plan
has a lacuna***

It may be seen that the position of India in regard to service industries is still extremely backward. In 1931, the proportion of workers in tertiary occupations was about 13%, in spite of the wrong inclusion of numerous women under 'domestic service'. As considerable expansion has taken place since in transport and trade and other service industries, the proportion cannot be less than 15% now, even if

the error just mentioned is corrected. Therefore one is puzzled by the proposal in the Bombay Plan to raise the proportion of tertiary workers to only 16% at the termination of their 15 year plan. How then does the Bombay Plan propose to raise the living standards? It is clear that the Plan has not neglected the needs of people in regard to housing, education and public services; in fact, the Plan begins by taking stock of such needs. Could all these needs be met by such a small addition to the proportion of tertiary workers? Could the enormous needs for services of a population of 400 millions be met without a much larger increase in the numbers engaged in tertiary occupations, especially as most service industries are pursued on the small scale? It appears to me that this part of the Bombay Plan needs careful revision. In fact this is the crux of the problem of raising living standards and deserves much greater attention than has been given in the Bombay Plan.

It must be admitted that the progress in tertiary occupations will be slow for some time, owing to the inertia of custom and disinclination to change, especially among the rural folk. Further, employment, as shown above, cannot expand rapidly and provide income to any largely increasing numbers in the near future. The spread of popular education is the key to the improvement of ideas of living. This too will take time. Having regard to all this, we have carefully to devise for India a plan by which maximum employment without loss of efficiency should be the guiding principle.

Mechanization in a Limited Sphere

An important means of achieving the above result is to limit the scope and pace of mechanization in such a way as to maximize employment without undue loss of efficiency. Having regard to the fact that our capital resources are none too abundant, having regard also to the fact that the effective demand for goods cannot rise too rapidly in India owing to causes mentioned above, we may adopt mechanization within a limited sphere and at a discriminatory pace. We may for long leave many lines of production to handicrafts, especially such lines in which the advantage of the mechanical process is not decisive. For instance, while spinning of yarn for ordinary cloth may be done infinitely more profitably in the mills, much of the weaving may be done without much loss of efficiency on the handloom. In

all lines of production where variety and artistic beauty are important the work can be left to skilled human hand with advantage, while mechanization is more advantageous in all lines of staple production wherein standardization and mass production are possible.

In general, it may be advisable to turn out the basic product by mechanized methods, leaving to handicrafts the processing and finishing of the basic product. In the textile industry, spinning may be carried out largely in the mills, but weaving may be done on the handloom in the case of many varieties of cloth and finishing processes like printing and dyeing may be done efficiently by hand. Thus, while employment, will be limited in the spinning part of the industry, there is large scope for employment in the numerous other processes which have to come after spinning. The above is true also of important basic products like iron and steel, and aluminium, which although produced in highly mechanized and centralized factories could be worked up later in small workshops by using hand power.

Decentralization of industry is not only possible but eminently desirable

Another method by which the objective above stated can be carried out is decentralization of industry. Even where mechanization is more profitable than the handicraft, it may be more advantageous to workers, physically and morally, if the industry is pursued in small scattered units without causing congestion and over-crowding. This was not feasible when steam power was used to run machinery, but this is now possible by the extended use of electricity, electric motors and internal combustion engines instead of steam engines—and by the development of certain types of adjustable machine-tools connected with the use of electric power. All these have made decentralization not only feasible but also profitable in the case of most consumption goods industries. Only in certain heavy industries is concentration now essential for productive efficiency.

The possibilities of decentralized industry have been demonstrated in many continental countries, especially Switzerland, Denmark and Germany. In Switzerland even delicate work like watch-making is being successfully carried out in small decentralized units, each area specialising in one component part, thereby gaining great technical efficiency. Even in the U.S.A., famous for colossal super

ant-hill factories, decentralization has made considerable progress and has proved a great blessing to workers in many small towns.

In India too, a start has been made in decentralized industry, especially in textiles. The number of single unit powerlooms and small powerloom factories has greatly increased in recent years, especially, in the Bombay Province. That the importance of electrification for decentralizing industry has been fully realized by the advanced wing of the Congress, is clear from the speeches and writings of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Kripalani. What is now urgently needed is a concerted plan for decentralizing such industries as can be pursued efficiently in small units, and the will to carry it out promptly. We will then see garden cities rising all over the country, throbbing with industry and offering congenial work to labourers from the congested country-side.

***Broad-based
Development
needed***

Thirdly, the economic plan to be launched must be broad-based. Industrialization is only one of the lines of advance. Provision must be made also for (a) basic undertakings like roads, railways, irrigation works, hydro-electric works, (b) reconstruction and conservation, which include slum clearance, flood control, afforestation, etc. Only when such works are carried out will rapid industrialization and quick agricultural improvement be rendered possible. Such works will incidentally give steady employment to labourers, first in their construction and subsequently in their upkeep. Road-making in particular can give a great fillip to employment. Even in the U.S.A. where road-making is largely mechanized, it is found that as much as 81% of the expenditure incurred on roads went to employment, 29% direct employment on roads and 52% on labour employed in producing and transporting materials for construction. The effect on employment of road-making in India must be much greater. All construction works—including building—will give steady employment to labour, besides accelerating economic development.

Fourthly, as industrialization is for the national good and not merely for enriching a few capitalists, measures like minimum wage and social insurance are essential for enabling the worker to maintain reasonable standards of living.

But these measures cannot be effectively carried out without greatly increasing employment—productive employment—on the lines suggested above. As these measures are dealt with elsewhere in this volume, only a passing reference need be made here.

Fifthly, as mentioned before, it is not enough to provide for a steady income; it is also necessary, in the peculiar conditions of India, to take steps for seeing that incomes are used for maintaining proper standards of living, and not wasted. Addiction to alcoholic drinks, expensive social feasts, payment of interest on usurious loans—these are among the forms of waste. Education of the proper kind is the only remedy for such evils. The cinema and the village stage and rural libraries can be effectively used for popularising ideas on clean living.

***India's
economic
future is and
should be a
world
concern***

Raising the standard of living in India is thus an exceedingly difficult matter. If work is undertaken on the above lines, regular employment with steady incomes can be given year after year to several millions now eking out a miserable existence. Let it be noted that this is no work of charity; it will pay large dividends to the nation in the form of economic security, improved health and social contentment. Every rise in the living standards of the masses will create a steady demand for the products of our industries and thus ensure good profits to industrialists and high dividends to investors. Nor will the benefits be confined to India; for a rise in the living standards of the masses in this country will have highly beneficent reactions on world economy as a whole. One may go further and claim that only by a steady rise in the living standards of the teeming millions of India and China could the recurring world slumps be controlled. There is now threat of a wide-spread slump in the coming years, but I venture to assert that the launching of an economic plan in India will be the most effective insurance against such a slump. The economic development of India, therefore, must be regarded as a world concern, and if this is properly realised by the industrially advanced nations of the West, they will readily (and not reluctantly) assist us in effectively carrying out the economic plan, which will be launched by free India in the near future.

THE NEW EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

K. D. JONES

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Mr. K. D. Jones traces the history of India's new-born Employment Service, describes its organisational set-up and actual working. He states his belief that, as there are encouraging signs of a realisation of its utility and its rich potentialities as a definite State-provided social service, it has come to stay as an integral and vital part of the

Historical

THE HISTORY of the Employment Service in India began 25 years ago ; but for the first two decades it was a history of negation. Although in 1921 India ratified the I.L.O. Convention on unemployment it was not implemented by the establishment of employment agencies. The primary reason for this was a feeling that as the demand for industrial labour was then exceeding the supply, employment agencies would serve little useful purpose. From time to time the Government of India reconsidered the desirability of setting up Employment Exchanges modelled on those of western countries, but in 1931 the Royal Commission on Labour dealt a crushing blow to the idea by indicating that it did not favour setting up public employment agencies during a period of depression when they would be unlikely to have sufficient demands for labour. Thus in 1921 the establishment of Exchanges was negated because the demand for industrial labour exceeded the supply and in 1931 because the supply of industrial labour exceeded the demand, an interesting reversal of reasons.

In accordance with the Government of India Act, 1935, responsibility for the subject of unemployment was transferred from the Central to the Provincial Governments and since there could then be no uniform policy on the subject India was forced in 1938 to denounce the I.L.O. Convention. Meanwhile, Labour Enquiry Committees were set up by various Provincial Governments and these generally expressed a belief in the principles of a free public employment service. The Labour Enquiry Committees set up in the United Provinces in 1938 and in the Provinces of Bihar and Bombay in 1940 expressed the opinion that public Employment Exchanges would lead to a better organisation of labour supply and could do much to remove the prevalent evils of bribery and corruption which resulted from the existing methods of recruitment. It was not until 1942, however, that these opinions could be taken into account by the Central Government.

The beginning The first Employment Exchanges in India, nine in number, came into being in 1943-44 because of a need to overcome the acute war-time shortages of technical personnel. They

functioned under the control and supervision of the National Service Labour Tribunals which had been established in 1940 to ensure that there was an adequate supply of skilled technical personnel to meet the demands of industry. Thus the Employment Exchanges at first were merely a branch of the National Service Labour Tribunals and a means for ensuring that available technical personnel did not slip through the meshes of the Tribunals. The results achieved were very limited and resulted primarily from compulsory powers under the National Service Orders. This connection between the war-time labour policies and Employment Exchanges is unique in that the first Exchanges in India were created from war-time policy whereas in other countries the public employment agencies were already in existence and were entrusted with the administration of war-time labour policies.

Scope of the present set-up

In 1945, it was decided that resettlement should be a civilian and not a military responsibility. The Labour Department, which was charged with this responsibility, then decided to set up a network of Employment Exchanges whose primary function would be the resettlement of demobilised members of the Defence Services and discharged war workers. Even at that time, however, a permanent employment service was envisaged. To quote from a broadcast talk given on 14th July 1945 by Mr. S. Lall, Secretary of the Department of Labour, "An integrated Employment Service is being set up. Its scope for the present is limited to the resettlement and employment of demobilised members of the Defence Services and discharged war workers. It will be unwise to extend the scope of this organisation to cover all categories of employment-seekers as the employment opportunities that are likely to be available during the transition from war to peace will be limited. But as the field of employment is enlarged through the execution of post-war development schemes, the Employment Service will also extend its scope. We hope that the Employment Service we are establishing will eventually develop into a permanent service covering all categories of employment-seekers and that it will promote full employment and higher living standards for the people of India".

Staff Training

With the exception of the small staffs of the National Service Labour Tribunals whose experience had been

restricted to a particular phase of war-time activity, staff with experience in the work of an employment service were not available in India. At the very outset it was recognised that no scheme brought into being would function efficiently unless there was trained, competent and trust-worthy managerial staff. A staff Training Centre was, therefore, set up in Delhi to which selected managerial staff were sent for training and where they were required to pass tests before being appointed to posts in the employment exchanges.

The training course given to the managerial staff is of three months' duration and is in three parts. The first part consists of theoretical training at the Staff Training Centre where the mechanism of the employment service is explained and trainees are given an outline of the general field of labour problems, as it is realised that an officer with insight into labour economics is generally more fitted to assist in the administration of an employment service than one who has merely a knowledge of the details of Exchange procedure. After passing from the Training Centre, staff are sent on an industrial tour which is designed to give them an insight into the processes and conditions of employment in the more important industries so that they may be better equipped to understand the labour needs of employers. The third and final part of training consists of practical experience at an Employment Exchange. In addition to the training imparted in Delhi, some officers have been sent to the United Kingdom for special training with the Ministry of Labour and National Service. Great importance is attached to adequate training which does not end with the initial course. On the contrary, refresher courses are now being given to all managerial officers and a training scheme is under preparation for clerks and other officers engaged in employment work.

**Administrative
Organisation**

The organisation which is responsible for the administration of the Government policy for resettlement and employment is the Directorate-General of Resettlement and Employment in which there are a number of Directorates each responsible for administration in a particular sphere. The Directorate of Employment Exchanges is responsible for the administration of exchanges, while other Directorates

are responsible for subjects such as technical and vocational training, publicity, etc. For administrative convenience, the country has been divided into the nine regions of Bengal & Assam, Bihar and Orissa, Bombay, Central Provinces, Delhi and Ajmer-Merwara, Madras, Punjab and North West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan and United Provinces. Each region has a Regional Employment Exchange and a number of Sub-Regional Exchanges, the total number functioning at present being 69.

Regional Exchanges, in addition to discharging the normal functions of an Employment Exchange for their areas, also act as Clearing Houses for vacancy purposes. Each Regional and Sub-Regional Exchange is allocated a number of revenue districts and is responsible for the registration and placing of applicants and the obtaining and filling of vacancies within these districts.

Higher appointments

In view of the fact that the number of applicants for higher grade appointments in the area of any one Exchange is likely to be limited, Appointments Branches have been set up at each of the nine Regional Exchanges to deal with applicants possessing higher grade qualifications and posts of an administrative, managerial, professional or technical character. Their establishment has been based on the recognition of the necessity for ensuring that persons having qualifications of a high order are employed to the best advantage in the national interest. These branches have been charged with the special responsibility of resettling ex-officers from the Forces.

At the nine Regional Exchanges, special Women's Sections have also been opened. A Lady Assistant Manager is in charge of each of these sections which, among other functions, are charged with the responsibility of resettling ex-members of the Women's Services. It has not been found necessary as yet to open a Women's Section at each Sub-Regional Exchange as the number of women applicants for employment assistance has been very limited.

Scope of the Service

At present the Employment Service, as has already been indicated deals primarily with two categories of employment-seekers—demobilised members of the Defence Services and discharged war workers. Some criticism has been

encountered because the service does not cater for all categories of employment-seekers but, in the initial stages, an employment service cannot be expected to cater for the whole of the population of a country of the size of India. Extension of the scope of the service is being made in individual Provinces as circumstances permit. The Provincial Governments of Bengal, Sind and United Provinces have already decided that the Exchanges should deal with all categories of employment-seekers, while in other Provinces there have been extensions of scope to include specific categories of employment-seekers. One interesting extension has been the decision in Madras to deal with Burma evacuees.

***Employment
Information
Bureaux***

In a vast country like India, 69 Exchanges are obviously inadequate to ensure that there is a branch of the employment service within easy access of all. Methods had, therefore, to be thought of by which it could be ensured that employment-seekers could receive assistance without making long journeys to the Exchanges. Employment Information Bureaux have been set up throughout the country to form a link between demobilised persons and the Exchanges. Their main function is to act as a two-way post office between the Exchanges and demobilised persons etc., saving the latter unnecessary travelling and expense. While they do not directly deal either with registration or placing work, it is possible for demobilised persons and discharged war-workers to secure the full benefits of the Exchange service through them. It has been left to each individual Province to determine the number and type of Bureaux needed to suit its own particular requirements.

***Pre-release
Registration
and Resettle-
ment advice***

Another method used to save ex-Service personnel unnecessary travelling to the Exchanges is to register them at the time of release and to forward their particulars to the Exchange covering the area in which they intend to reside. Each demobilised person is given a card which he is asked to post to the Exchange in the event of needing employment assistance. This has proved a very satisfactory method as it has enabled Exchanges to have adequate details of ex-Servicemen and at the same time it has helped those being released from the Forces to have some appreciation of the assistance they will receive from the Exchanges. This particular task has been discharged through a Resettlement Advice Service

which has also dealt with many other types of problems raised by ex-Servicemen in connection with their resettlement in civilian life. Somewhat on the same lines, there is an arrangement for establishments which are discharging ex-war-workers to complete registration cards in respect of these workers prior to their discharge.

Mobile Exchanges are a Unique Feature of the Indian Employment Service

There has been a large volume of postal registrations but it has to be admitted that this is not one of the most satisfactory means of contact between applicants and Exchanges, particularly in the case of illiterate persons of whom there is a fairly high percentage in India. It was realised from the beginning that personal contact was the only really satisfactory one and it was accordingly decided that each Exchange should have a Mobile Section which could regularly visit the more remote areas to register applicants and to explore possible avenues of employment. Mobile Sections are already in operation at some Exchanges and their initial tours have proved most successful. It is believed that this attachment of a Mobile Section to each Exchange is a feature peculiar to the Indian Employment Service and it perhaps forms the most interesting experiment which is being made.

Madras leads the way

The Madras Provincial Government felt there was need for a full employment office in each revenue district. It was, therefore, decided to set up a District Employment Office in each revenue district in which an Employment Exchange had not been established. These District Employment Offices function as out-houses of the Employment Exchanges responsible for the revenue districts concerned and are discharging the full functions of an Exchange. A similar scheme is under consideration by the Bihar Government and is likely to be introduced shortly. These schemes indicate the elasticity in the structure of the Organisation which has been designed to allow for adaptation according to the individual needs of the Provinces.

Card Index System

The fundamental idea behind the procedure adopted in India for the Exchanges was that, whether the Organisation remained under the jurisdiction of the Central Government or was eventually taken over by the Provincial Governments, it should lay the foundation for a sound and uniform structure on which a permanent employment service could be built up. As the Employment Exchanges in India would be required to cover vast areas, it was recognised that the amount of

correspondence would be heavy and that there would be need for a simple yet efficient filing system whereby correspondence could be made readily available while at the same time dispensing with bulky records. A simple card index system based on the envelope pattern has, therefore, been introduced for both registration and placing work. Details regarding registration or vacancy orders are entered on the outside of the envelopes and all relevant correspondence is filed in the envelope portion. All documents relating to an applicant or order are kept together by this means and are readily available when required. This feature of the mechanism of the Indian Exchanges has aroused considerable interest owing to its extreme simplicity. Coupled with the card indexing is a trade index numbering system which enables applicants and vacancies to be easily matched.

Has come to stay

The success of any organisation lies finally in its achievements. Remembering that the Indian Exchange Organisation is still in its infancy, it is felt that a measure of success has already been attained and that the organisation is on its way to acceptance by the public as a permanent social service. Perhaps the best indication of this is given in a press note issued by the Government on April 18th this year which says, "The utility of the Central Government's Employment Organisation was recognised by Provincial and States' Labour Ministers who recently met in Conference in New Delhi. Concensus of opinion in the Conference was in favour of making it a permanent organisation subject to such modifications as might be required to suit provincial and peacetime requirements". The following statistics will give some idea of the progress made by the Employment Exchanges :—

<i>Month</i>		<i>No. of Exchanges open</i>	<i>No. of Registrations</i>	<i>No. of Placings</i>
April	1946	54	34,104	4,376
May	"	64	47,765	6,457
June	"	65	46,927	6,428
July	"	67	58,192	8,095
August	"	67	50,931	7,601
September	"	69	52,118	8,492
October	"	69	48,572	9,484
November	"	69	54,264	11,378
December	"	69	47,259	10,570
January	1947	69	71,187	12,593
February	"	69	56,877	11,380
March	"	69	57,700	12,093
April	"	69	51,613	12,415

It will be observed that progress has been made although there has been a tendency in the later months for figures of placings to be static and for a slight downward tend in registrations. This has been the result of the disturbances in the country which have immobilised labour in certain areas and consequently tended to hamper the work of the employment service.

With the changes in Government, and the likely transfer of the administration of the organisation to Provincial Governments, the fate of the Employment Service is in the balance. Since, however, the structure of the organisation has been built on a firm and practical foundation, since the statistics indicate that a degree of progress is being made, and since Provincial Governments have shown their desire for a permanent organisation, there is every indication that the new Employment Service has come to stay in India.

Future possibilities

It is hoped that the future will find the Employment Exchanges constituting an integral part of India's labour machinery. That it has a notable part to play in the economic development of the country, particularly in the sphere of social service, seems certain. The collection of manpower statistics, promotion of mobility of labour, distribution of manpower between industries, promotion of schemes for de-casualisation of labour, and administration of schemes for unemployment insurance and relief are only a few of those which have been mooted already as possible fields of useful work. There will obviously be need to expand the number of exchanges considerably if the scope of their work is to be extended along these lines. The important thing is that a beginning has been made and it is a beginning which is obviously impressing many clear-thinking Indians and making them realise the potentialities of a well-organised employment service.

TRAINING FOR AND WITHIN INDUSTRY

K. SANJIWA RAO

Director of Industries and Commerce, Jaipur

As an integral part of industrial planning in India, Shri K. Sanjiwa Rao suggests the adoption of the system of training for and within industry obtaining in the U.S.A., with suitable modifications—technical training centres run by industrialists or group of industrialists themselves with initial State assistance and State-provided inspectional and directional staff for purposes of large factory industries and government-run Vocational Schools and Polytechnics to train men for cottage industries.

AT A TIME when India is embarking on a long-range programme of industrial development as a means towards stabilising her national economy and, thereby, increasing the material prosperity of her teeming millions, the value, importance and urgency of training and equipping rank-and-file workers to fill various positions in industry, can hardly be over-emphasized. Indeed, a steady flow of skilled and technically qualified personnel is a *sine qua non* of industrial progress; and, unless prompt measures are taken to provide adequate training facilities, the current shortage of skilled personnel within the country is likely to constitute a serious bottleneck in the development of Indian industries.

The need for a systematic, well-co-ordinated and comprehensive national programme of "training for industry" in India becomes all the more apparent when examined against the background of the existing industrial structure of the country. There are, today, two main sources of industrial production, namely, (1) cottage industries, providing full-time work to nearly 50 million people (besides forming subsidiary occupation of the agriculturists); and (2) nearly 2½ million factory workers.

Cottage industries

Cottage industries play, and for a long time will continue to play, an important role in the economic life of India because of the vast mass of frozen man power and relative scarcity of capital resources within the country. On account of their inherent vitality, they have so far not only withstood the onslaught of machine competition—both domestic and foreign—but are making considerable headway in recent years as is evident from the progressively increasing quantities of raw material consumed by them. There is, therefore, no reason why they should not be encouraged and fostered, particularly when they provide means of subsistence to several millions of unemployed and underemployed people. At present, these cottage industries are being carried on mostly along traditional and antiquated lines, involving inefficient and laborious processes of manufacture. Moreover, the nature and designs of their products are generally out of step with the modern tastes of the consuming public. As a result, both the quality and the quantity of their output leaves much to be desired.

**Training
under factory
conditions—
not purely
academic
courses**

What then could be more effective in giving a new life to these indigenous cottage industries than to train the younger generation of artisans in the use of labour-saving appliances and improved techniques of production so that they could turn out goods of marketable quality at lower cost? The facilities now available for training in industry are woefully inadequate in relation to the number of trades and occupations and the number of persons employed there in: the total capacity of existing institutions in India scarcely exceeds 20,000 students, as compared with over 100 different industries. Even in these existing institutions the standard of training is generally so low, due to the absence of qualified instructors, that the trainees cannot be expected to benefit much from the courses. Moreover, these vocational schools are run on lines basically similar to those imparting purely liberal education, with short working hours and long vacations, rather than under ideal factory conditions, with the result that students graduating from them find it extremely difficult to reconcile themselves to factory routine and the more exacting conditions of work in industry.

**Factory
Industries**

During the past quarter of a century or more, India has made considerable strides in the development of modern large-scale industries, particularly in the field of cotton, jute, iron and steel, cement, sugar, glass, leather and chemicals. Recent additions to the list of Indian industries are air-craft, automobiles, locomotives, ship-building and the manufacture of machinery and machine tools. Plans for establishing several others are also on the anvil. But the present low standard of efficiency of the average Indian labourer not only constitutes a challenge to the further advancement of industry, but even threatens to drive out the existing industries if left exposed to the full blast of foreign competition. Even the cotton mill industry which is the leading industry of India, almost 100 years old, and which has the peculiar advantage of having on its very door-step ample supply of raw material, cheap labour and an extensive domestic market for the disposal of its output, still needs to be shielded by high protective tariff, while the poor consumer-taxpayer is made to bear the financial burden on this account.

**Inefficiency
of Indian
Labour**

Leading industrialists of India often complain that Indian labour is inefficient, lacks the power of sustained work, is given to frequent absenteeism, is addicted to the habit of

loitering and wasting time while at work, and is lacking in a sense of discipline. Writing in the Golden Jubilee Souvenir of the Indian Textile Journal in 1940, Sir Homy P. Mody remarked: "The problem for Indian industries.....resolves itself into one of greater efficiency. Indian labour is commonly supposed to be cheap, and if wages in terms of money are alone taken into calculation, there would be justification for the belief. Judged, however, in their relation to a given unit of production, wages in India are definitely high, compared to those in countries against which she must compete. The first condition of further progress must therefore be an improvement in the efficiency of labour".

The level of efficiency of an average Indian worker is far below that of his counter-part in other industrialized countries of the world. At the 14th annual meeting of the All-India Organisation of Industrial Employers held in New Delhi on April 21, 1947, the President in his address stated that an average Indian employee did not only produce much less than his contemporary fellow-workers in other countries, but was producing less than what the latter was doing in the past. In support of this statement, he said: "The productivity of the Indian Textile worker is just slightly over 1/6th of that of his fellow-worker in the U.S.A., less than 1/4th of that in the U.K. and Germany, and less than 1/3rd of that in Japan, Switzerland, Italy, France and the Netherlands". In respect of colliery labour the out-put of an Indian miner was said to be less than 20% of that of a miner in the U.S.A., 33% of that in Poland and 26% of that in the Netherlands.

Several factors are responsible for this relative inefficiency of the Indian worker: (1) absence of a separate class or community of factory workers in the social organisation, with traditions and back-ground closely related to industry; (2) widespread illiteracy among the masses, and industrial workers in particular; (3) lack of facilities for comprehensive and systematic training in various trades and occupations, particularly in factory industries which require a high degree of mental and mechanical ability; (4) poor physique of the workers due to a low standard of living, malnutrition, inadequate and insanitary housing, lack of medical and recreational facilities, etc.; (5) old and obsolete machinery and equipment; (6) faulty methods of selection and

placement; and (7) ineffective direction, supervision and control resulting from faulty, unscientific methods of management.

By far the most important of these factors is the inadequate training of both the rank-and-file industrial workers as well as the management or executive personnel. Leaders or captains of industries in India at present acquire the necessary knowledge in the school of experience by the long-drawn process of trial-and-error, often resulting in slow progress and frequent losses. Consequently, they tend to lean too heavily on time-honoured practices and unscientific "rule of thumb" methods of management. But the operations of modern business and industry have become so large and complex, so broad and diverse, that they call for competent administrators trained in the fundamentals of business administration and in scientific methods of industrial management, and fully equipped to make wise decisions and ensure their successful execution.

Basic Education with an industrial bias

In the light of the foregoing observations it should not be difficult to determine the system of training best suited to Indian conditions.

The first stage in the training of the younger generation of factory workers should start with general basic education which should be made compulsory, at least in urban areas, for all children whatever their ultimate choice of profession may be, and should precede vocational training in any one of the specific trades or occupations. Such liberal education with a definite industrial bias, and extending over a period of at least six years, is necessary in order to equip boys and girls with qualities required for the proper discharge of their duties as citizens of the State. In addition to teaching the three R's, the other aspects of education which should receive adequate attention are the formation of character, the development of personality, physical culture and the cultivation of working habits. These qualities are equally essential for a person to be a success in life and to be of use to society. A sense of responsibility, spirit of service and strict adherence to discipline are some of the other qualities which should be inculcated in them in their tender years. Special mention is made of this aspect of primary education for the reason that industrial employers, as pointed above,

constantly complain of the irresponsibility of labour, its indiscipline and its dilatory habits.

One of the well-known defects of the present system of education in this country is that, by laying too much emphasis on purely literary or academic subjects, it encourages a person belonging even to the working classes to look upon manual labour as something degrading. For this reason, schools imparting basic education in industrial areas should follow a curriculum which has a definite industrial bias. They should be equipped with workshops for different crafts, where boys and girls could receive manual training. The scope of these workshops will of necessity be restricted to providing facilities to the children to develop their particular hobbies and to help them in selecting their future vocation under the guidance of their instructors. It should be remembered, however, that the object of these schools should be not to turn out ready trained labour but to prepare boys and girls for further specialised training in specific trades and occupations.

After the preliminary basic education of the young workers, the next stage in their training will be to equip them for positions in the various branches of organised industry.

***Training for
and within
Industry:
Example of
other coun-
tries***

In the absence of a separate community of industrial workers, it is common practice today in most mills and factories in India to recruit any raw hand that offers himself for employment, regardless of his experience, background and ability. Possessing an agricultural or semi-agricultural background and having no industrial bent whatsoever the raw and illiterate recruit enters the factory with a certain amount of nervousness and a lack of knowledge of his place in industry. He is put on the job immediately, and for a short period of about 3 to 6 months he tries desperately to "pick up" whatever knowledge he can by the method of absorption, without any direct guidance or supervision from a qualified instructor. Invariably, the senior operator from whom the new recruit tries to learn his work is not himself in any way qualified to impart correct training in a manner easily understood by the recruit, and any instruction he may offer out of his own good-will may at best be only patchy and not based on any

planned method or syllabus. Therefore, more often than not, the new recruit will learn and perpetuate bad habits and slipshod methods, which would be difficult to correct at a later stage.

All this, points to the inevitable conclusion that training of operatives on sound and systematic lines is indispensable if a high degree of craftsmanship in industry is to be attained and maintained. It is here that a brief comparison of the systems of "training within industry" followed in some of the other industrialized countries might come in use.

In Great Britain, a system of "apprenticeship" not very different from that obtaining in India today provided until recently all the training even in the most highly skilled industries. Technical education in the modern sense was thus absent. With the recognition of the value of scientific knowledge in the field of manufacturing operations, however, technical institutions were established to supplement the practical training provided by the factories and workshops. Thus, industrial education in Great Britain now consists of two parts, each of equal importance practical training in factories and workshops, and theoretical instruction pertaining to the specific trades in evening schools.

Trade schools or technical schools, operating during the day form the main feature of the European system of industrial education. Admission to these schools is restricted to those who have already served a certain minimum period of apprenticeship in industry. Several highly organised institutions with well-equipped workshops exist in France to provide a thorough practical-cum-theoretical training in place of the traditional apprenticeship in industry which prevailed there as in other European countries.

In the United States of America many of the large industrial corporations such as General Motors, Ford Motor Company, Chrysler Corporation, General Electric, Westinghouse, Allis-Chalmers and Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Company maintain their own technical institutes under highly qualified staff of instructors for imparting theoretical and scientific knowledge to their employees. In the Henry Ford Trade School in Dearborn, Mich. for instance, where the so-called 'sandwich' system prevails, students spend one week in the class rooms and laboratories

acquiring the fundamentals of their trade, and during the following two weeks they work in the adjoining plant of the Ford Motor Company, turning out products which go into the manufacture of automobiles. This, incidentally, shows the appreciation of the fact that trainees should be taught right from the start not to waste material but to produce goods of value so that even during the period of their training they may be an asset rather than a liability to society.

Smaller companies in the United States which do not have, the resources to maintain their own technical institutions, nevertheless maintain some form of employee training programme in their plants for imparting both theoretical training under "laboratory conditions" and practical training under actual factory conditions, with the object of developing skilled and capable operatives. Others have worked out "co-operative" training arrangements with State-owned or public vocational schools, technical institutions and universities, of which there is a large number all over the country, whereby operatives may attend courses of instruction in these institutions after completing their shift in the factory. At many of the schools, no fees are charged; in others, the fees are paid by the employer himself.

Practical training in the United States is of two types—"on the job" and "vestibule" training. In the case of training "on the job", a textile worker, for instance, may be started as a cleaner and by a process of up-grading may be advanced from one position to another, until he becomes a spinner, having been trained by close contact with the job. Under the "vestibule" system, on the other hand, a part of the machinery and equipment is set aside, on which learners may practise under the guidance of special instructors, without interfering with the normal course of production. Each of these two methods has its own peculiar merits as well as demerits and, due to limitations of space, it is not possible to go into them. Suffice it to say that the vestibule system is better suited to large plants with a relatively large number of employees, and which can afford to maintain separate training sections under full-time instructors.

*programme
action for
dia* In the present stage of her industrial development and considering the limited resources at the disposal of the Government, it may be advisable for India to adopt a system

of training more or less similar to the one obtaining in the U.S.A., with, of course, suitable modifications to suit local conditions. In respect of large-scale industries, technical institutes should be started and maintained by the large industrial concerns themselves for the benefit of their employees. The curriculum, the courses of studies and the duration of training will obviously vary with the nature of each industry. Therefore, the training programme of each company, or group of companies engaged in similar activities will have to be "tailor-made" to fit its own requirements. To encourage the establishment of such schools or institutes, the Central Government will have to take the initiative by offering liberal grants-in-aid. It should also maintain an inspectional and directional staff for planning, supervising, trade-testing and co-ordinating the training activities all over the country, in the same way as the Division of Vocational Education and the Apprenticeship Training Service of the Federal Department of Labour operate in the U.S.A. On successful completion of their training, candidates should be awarded certificates of competency, so that, in course of time, the industries may be asked to employ only those holding such certificates. The training of personnel for small-scale and cottage industries, however, should be the primary responsibility of the Provincial and Central Governments, which will have to provide vocational schools or polytechnic institutes equipped with workshops for imparting both theoretical and practical training under actual factory conditions.

Thus, with the close co-operation of the State and private industry, an effective system of 'training within industry' may be evolved for turning out a highly skilled and efficient labour force, which would contribute towards national stability by increasing production and raising the standard of living, in this period of great material possibilities.

THE SCOPE OF FUTURE LABOUR LEGISLATION IN INDIA

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Professor Radhakamal Mukerjee suggests a reduced working week, (starting with mining labour), a National Labour Relations Act and a National Labour Relations Board on the American model; compulsory conciliation instead of compulsory arbitration; a more positive promotion of Trade Unionism; statutory compulsion in respect of provision of housing, besides naming priorities in the building up of a stable structure of Social Security for the Indian Worker.

IN the social charter for the common man adumbrated at Philadelphia by the International Labour Conference certain minimum obligations of Governments with regard to employment and labour conditions were formulated. It is now recognised that no country in the world should permit low living standards of industrial workers to persist in view of the attendant international consequences. It is difficult in this brief compass to set forth the scope of future labour legislation in this country. But certain fundamental lines of policy may be indicated. India should gradually move towards the reduction of hours of work. In the major industrial countries of the world, the working hours have been reduced to a 40 hour week. In Soviet Russia a 36 hour week is prevalent in some industries. A beginning in the shape of reduction of hours should be made in respect of mining labour. Both in Bihar and Bengal coal fields the hours of work for the miners and loaders do not exceed 44 a week, under-ground and 45 in open workings. Thus it may not be difficult to adopt by legislation a 40 hour week for underground labour. In India, of late, night work has been generally prevalent in the textile industry. A night shift under Indian housing and social condition provokes greater family break-down and immorality, as it denies the workers even the few opportunities for education and recreation that they may obtain. The night shift should be abolished. One of the lacunae of the Indian Factories Act is that there is no protection against carrying loads which are too heavy. The maximum weight of loads for an adult woman is 55 lbs., in France, 50 lbs., in Great Britain and 40 lbs. in Soviet Russia. 35 lbs. may be fixed as the maximum load which should be carried by workers in India and Indian Mines and Factories Acts amended accordingly. The Indian Factories Act should also be extended to small-scale establishments. The limit should be reduced to 10 persons where mechanical power is used and the regulation of non-mechanical factory premises employing 20 or more persons should, in the first instance, be limited to the employment of child-labour, sanitation and ventilation. With reference to medical care, Provincial Governments should make rules requiring (in the first place) that all establishments that employ more than 500 workers should

maintain a dispensary and a whole-time physician and, secondly, that the resources of different plantations, collieries and industrial establishments in undeveloped areas should be pooled by mutual agreements in order to maintain hospitals at convenient centres, with ambulance facilities to take patients to the hospitals from a distance.

***An Indian
National
Labour Relations Board***

The Government of India will soon pass legislation requiring compulsory recognition of Trade Unions. It is essential in this connection to forbid certain unfair practices that have been impeding both the formation and proper and speedy development of labour unions in India. We should follow in this connection very closely the relevant sections of the U.S.A. National Labour Relations Act of 1935. This is regarded by American labour as its Magna Carta and makes illegal various unfair labour practices on the part of employers such as victimisation, formation of rival labour unions and other interferences by employers that hamper labour organisations. India should also have something like the National Labour Relations Board which would hear all kinds of disputes that arise in this connection and administer the N.L.R.A. Behind the findings and principles established by that Board are the basic notions of the people of the U.S.A. of the desirability of collective bargaining and of a Governmental agency to help struggling trade unions. In India an Act and a Board on similar lines will materially contribute to reduce the number of industrial disagreements and strikes and establish more harmonious relations between labour and managements.

***Compulsory
Conciliation
and not compulsory
arbitration***

The present writer considers that there are grave defects in both the Indian Trade Disputes Act and the Bombay Trades Disputes and Conciliation Act. It is not desirable however, to launch a controversy in these pages. It is suggested as a better alternative that the Government should provide for a machinery of compulsory conciliation and also for the process of mediation during the progress of an industrial dispute. The Board of Conciliation should be compulsory if the Government considers the industrial dispute significant enough. No strike or lock-out would be legal unless it is preceded by a week's notice and by an enquiry into the dispute by the Board of Conciliation which should be appointed immediately as the strike or lock-out notice is tendered and report within a week's time. There should be periodical

conferences of the parties during the continuance of a strike for the purpose of a mediation. A Tribunal of Arbitration should be set up if the parties to a dispute would consent to arbitration. Compulsory arbitration should not be adopted. There should be established an Industrial Court in every Province which would hear appeals against the orders or decisions of the Labour Commissioner or Labour Officers. It is desirable that in India we should adopt the definition of peaceful picketing during a strike as adopted in the British Trade Disputes Act, legally prohibit recruitment of labour by the employers during a strike and protect workers against discharge after an unsuccessful strike, as in the U.S.A.

**Social
Welfare
and Social
Security**

India has much progress to make in respect of legislation for social welfare and security. Housing standards, appallingly unsatisfactory as these have always been in India, gravely deteriorated during the war placing the health, efficiency and morals of the workers in greater jeopardy. It is essential to provide for industrial housing by making it obligatory for all employers who employ more than one hundred permanent workers to build dwellings for them. This provision should be aided by a Housing and Town Planning Act which should make municipal housing compulsory where shortage is judged to exist.

**A Table of
Priorities
in building up
of Social
Security**

The priorities in the structure of social security in India should, in our view, be scaled in the following order: (a) adoption of a minimum wage policy beginning with all unskilled workers in all industries and rising to semi-skilled and skilled workers in all industries, and rising to semi-skilled and skilled minimums—to begin any programme of social security without minimum wage fixation is to put the cart before the horse; (b) sickness insurance provided by a fund created by the contributions from the employers, workers and the State and aided by a State medical service panel; (c) unemployment insurance. The three are interdependent. Without living wages a compulsory scheme of sickness insurance is impracticable, meaningless. A contributory insurance scheme is necessary as it aids towards the maintenance of morale and self-respect and the balancing between benefits and costs in the minds of the people. But contributions cannot be expected if the workers do not obtain a living wage nor are sure of their employment.

Without fair wages, the incidence of illness and disablement cannot also be brought down. Without unemployment insurance, again, neither a living wage nor protection against sickness is of any avail. Finally, no programme of Social Security can realize its full objectives unless there is strong, effective and organized Unionism. Along with the five giants of Beveridge on the road to re-construction to be attacked and killed, viz., Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Unemployment, there is also a sixth giant in India, viz., Dismissal or Victimization for Trade Union Work, that has also to be tackled by legislation. Social Security should, therefore, be planned and co-ordinated for the establishment of a real national minimum. A piece-meal programme of Security is bound to defeat its own ends.

HOLIDAYS WITH PAY

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Shri Panakal observes a growing spark of realisation on the part of our employers that the chattel age is dead, thanks to our innate humanity, that holidays are not only essential but must be paid ones. The new legislation, while providing for a statutory holiday, has forced on society's attention the urgent need for planning the worker's holiday. Holidays are alright but the worker does not know what to do with them; he must be ASSISTED, shown the way. When once holidays become more common a national staggering of holidays would become a clamant necessity; organisation of holiday centres would have to be undertaken, catering for the simple needs and inexpensive pleasures of our work-people.

THE general principle of holidays with pay is a sound one and the practice is spreading rapidly affecting a steadily increasing number of groups. "It is widely felt that with the increasing productivity it should no longer be necessary for the workers to drudge a ceaseless round, year after year, without intermission. The movement is based on the recognition of the needs of the worker as a human being and not merely as an instrument of production."¹ In this mechanised age, this tendency is indeed a sign of progress which will avert serious social problems.

Holidays are days of exemption from labour or work, and hence a period of rest and recreation. "In every civilisation the round of the daily work has been interrupted by periods of communal relaxation and repose".² Everybody has an urge to break away, and needs at least occasional relief from toil and harsh and enervating conditions of existence. Holidays, therefore, arise out of considerations of *practical* utility. An industrialised world must, however, afford opportunities for social intercourse, sports and amusements of all sorts by making some compulsory provision for social relaxation.

ie Need for olidays

The need for holidays arises out of two conditions: it partly arises from considerations of health and efficiency, and the alleviation of the evil effects of industrial fatigue; and partly from considerations of a broad social character which are related to the development of the personality of the worker.

It is very easy to give a convincing case for holidays from the health point of view. If in an industrial establishment there are no paid holidays, there will certainly be an increased economic loss from ill-health and lowered vitality, and this will be borne chiefly by the workers, although the firm will not escape the loss from inefficiency and lowered productivity. The undoubted value of holidays in maintaining and increasing efficiency was stressed by the Royal Commission on Labour in India. The Commission pointed

¹ Report of the Director of the I.L.O. to the Twenty-fifth Session of the International Labour Conference.

² *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. IV, p. 412.

out that few workers needed these holidays so much as those in Indian factories. Holidays, if adequate in length and based on proper rates of pay, reduce the burden of absenteeism due to sickness probably as much as any single preventive measure, thus influencing attendance records favourably. In fact, the great set-off against the cost of holidays with pay is the decrease in sick leave and absenteeism.

Since the health and well-being of the workers are generally accepted as factors in industrial efficiency, the existence of nervous strain in them is an undesirable symptom. Industry in India is becoming more and more rationalised and mechanised with the result that employment becomes proportionately more exacting. The growth of monotonous repetitive work, and the constant need for readjustment to meet rapidly changing conditions in industry cause physical and mental exhaustion among workers. In future, changes are likely to be more rapid and frequent. Holidays unquestionably provide a much-needed break in a long period of physical and mental strain, and give a welcome opportunity for rest, change and recuperation. Settled habits of work need to be broken in the interests of all concerned. Periodical escape from the grind and routine of daily toil has positive values, as testified by many firms which have experimented for a long time with schemes of holidays with pay.

Workers take to their tasks with greater efficiency and tend to sustain their productiveness for longer periods when there is an assurance of holidays with pay. A diminution of output is sometimes seen when the workers are in need of a lay-off. It is uneconomical to keep up the monotony of continuous work, unrelieved by any relaxation. The ordinary worker is not strong enough to work hard throughout the year without a break. If one is made to work continuously his only method of recovering from over-fatigue would be to slow down or knock off altogether. Because of the specially enervating climate of this country, the strain of continuous work tells heavily on the health of the worker.

On the recreative side, a holiday has much in its favour. There are few city dwellers who cannot gain something from contact with nature. "The holidays which many may be

able to take are also a great source of strength of mind and body, and the combination of urban and rural life brings a width of out-look which is apt to be lacking in a purely urban population".¹

Further, holidays with pay will be of great benefit to the wives of the workers—an aspect that deserves consideration. It is a well known fact that for every two or three men working in industry, there must be someone working in the household contributing to their efficiency. Such persons who look after domestic work should, as a measure of social justice, participate in the promotion of health and recreation made possible by holidays with pay. The object to be aimed at is that at the end of a holiday the parents shall feel rested and that the children shall be happy and healthy.

***Holidays and
Young
Employees***

The youngest employees need holidays very badly. Young men who take up work in industrial concerns generally experience considerable mental and physical strain, especially during the first year of employment. They are always ready to enjoy a new and wider life and are not warped by experience. On the contrary, they are plastic and adaptable to circumstances and require a change of scenery, a change of occupation, congenial companionship, and freedom from the restraint of imposed discipline of the factory and the machine. All young persons with health undermined by work in factories and offices should have more holidays to recuperate their energy and to ensure well-balanced physical development. "In Soviet Russia, the minimum number of holidays granted is twelve, but this is extended to fourteen days or a month in the case of workers under eighteen years of age."² Planning and carrying out holiday programmes offer opportunities for the development of self-reliance and independence. As far as possible young people should be encouraged to travel comparatively far afield because of the difficulty the majority will have in doing so when they are married. Employers should give every kind of encouragement to their young employees in these matters.

***Distinction
between
Salaried Em-
ployees and
Wage-earners***

Absorbed in the development of industries and the intensive production of goods, most of our employers have so far

¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India p. 19.

² Mukherjee, Radhakamal, *The Indian Working Class* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, 1945), p. 52.

shown deplorable indifference to the needs of well organised holidays with pay for industrial wage-earners. Now, it is high time for making some organised attempts on a large scale to provide reasonable holidays away from home for those who deserve them. This proposal requires special attention not only because of the physical fatigue from which workers who have no chances of recuperation suffer but also because of the harmful psychological effects which ensue from the awareness that certain groups of men must labour while others enjoy.

It is a well known fact that salaried employees and executives have so far fared better than manual wage workers. Annual holidays with pay for salaried employees have been the rule for a long time past, but it was not until recently that paid holidays for wage-earners were introduced in a few industries. The provision of holidays with pay is sure to have an important psychological effect on industry in removing the unfortunate distinction between workers engaged directly in production and comparatively well-placed employees. "The distinction in treatment as between salaried and wage earning employees is, no doubt, to be explained by the fact that salaried employees are remunerated by a monthly salary as against the hourly or weekly employment of wage-earners, and the former are not generally paid for overtime. Salaried employees are usually few in number compared with the number of wage earners; holidays are usually taken in rotation and the work is done by others."¹ But this distinction has no logical basis and is socially undesirable. The system of holidays with pay to all workers is bound to create a favourable situation from the standpoint of industrial relations generally.

Cost of Holidays with Pay

Very often we come across statements regarding the heavy cost arising out of this system. Such statements, wherein attempts are made to show that the cost of paid holidays is a considerable percentage of the total annual wage bill, overlook many important points. They fail, for instance, to take into consideration the fact that a proportion of wage earners already have paid holidays, and that items such as over-time pay, special bonuses, and the wages of those not

¹ Fenslon, K. G., *Management and Labour* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1939), p. 204.

qualifying for paid holidays are included in the total wage bill.

Why holidays with pay?

The holidays should be with pay, because when they are taken without pay, their beneficial effects tend to be lost, especially among the low-paid workers, owing to the resultant financial worry. The valuable effects which they could bring can be had only when they are granted with pay. The absence of payment prevents those who have days off from using them in such a way as to add, in a considerable measure, to their happiness, health and efficiency. As many of them are obliged to contribute to the up-keep of the home, the pay should be adequate to make the holiday a benefit rather than a burden. Without pay, they are more often an added strain than a means of relaxation.

The increase in industrial productivity is likely to be large enough to absorb the cost without difficulty in a short time. In relation to the total expenses of the industry the percentage of the cost of providing holidays with pay is relatively small. The general effect of the adoption of the scheme would be to increase purchasing power, and consequently consumption, thus aiding business development.

Holidays with pay are a measure of social justice which contributes to a fairer distribution of employment and leisure. Universal holidays will result in the employment of additional work-people and diminish the number of the unemployed. Such a system may work as a substitute for unemployment in a new order of society, ensuring continuity of employment for all.

Planned Holidays

There is no need to lay greater stress on the benefits—social as well as individual—which would result from securing adequate holidays at least once a year for industrial workers and their families. Now that the principle is more widely accepted and the practice is also slowly developing, it is important that the question of organisation should receive scientific attention so as to provide an opportunity for workers to get away from industrial centres where so many of them are imprisoned.

While the new legislative measure¹ covers a great majority of workers, it has raised, without notice, a vast

¹ *The Factories Amendment Act, 1945.*

problem of education and organisation with regard to the manner in which and the means by which the workers should take their holidays—a problem which has not been studied systematically. It would clearly be a mistake to suppose that the problem of workers' holidays has been solved simply because the great majority of the workers receives an appreciable number of days' leave with pay every year. On the other hand, it raises the problem of how a large number of workers with low incomes could use their holidays in such a way as to strengthen their bodies and improve their minds.

Rotation of Holidays

The problem of rotation of holidays with pay is a fundamental one, both from the point of view of industry and of the transport and accommodation services. With a view to causing minimum dislocation to production, holidays should either be given in rotation in individual establishments, or those establishments which have to close down, should do so in rotation. Staggering is of first importance if we are to ensure enjoyable vacations for all. If the demand for holidays away from home is to be met at all, staggering must be general and systematically planned over a long period. Staggering for different places appears to be a most necessary reform for avoiding congestion. And should not and obviously cannot take their holidays at the same time, but they should be spread over as far as possible. Managements can provide such leave periods for workers without closing down plants or even curtailing operations, if the periods are systematically staggered over a long period. No truly rational organisation of workers' holidays will be possible until this has been arranged.

Splitting up of Holidays with Pay

Another important point is that as far as possible the annual holiday should not be split up. Dividing it up should be authorised only in quite exceptional circumstances, *i.e.*, only when it can really be shown that the grant of continuous holidays would seriously interfere with the working of the firm even if the holiday season were prolonged, and the technical necessities of the manufacturing processes so require, or in the event of the staff insisting on its being taken in parts for definite reasons.

Holiday Centres

It is likely that a section of the public has learned in recent years to appreciate the quite distinct charms of the country. A substantial advance in the direction of fostering and

encouraging this desirable state can be made by providing holiday centres for a thorough enjoyment of open-air life. Holiday centres should be suitably equipped and admirably placed. Such centres, as a rule, should provide for the following: a maximum amount of open-air recreation; cost the worker very little; eliminate very long journeys; simplify to the utmost the catering problem; provide companionship and develop enjoyment in group life. Workers on holidays should be able to use their long hours of leisure in developing their physical, intellectual and other capacities through activities of their choice. Open-air life alone will not do. People who visit the centres can enjoy the invigorating effect of open-air life more if it can be had in the company of cheerful friends and with plenty of easily accessible entertainment. Urban workers who leave the cities for their well-earned rest must be provided with not only the type of recreation to which they are accustomed but also other forms of healthy recreation.

It is desirable to supply them with properly equipped indoor and out-door recreation facilities, including sports grounds, fields for games and other arrangements for open-air sport, gymnasia, swimming pools, etc. In addition, provision for educational and recreational activities should be there: such as amateur or professional theatricals, musical concerts, motion pictures, libraries, lectures, and other informal activities related to the various interests of these groups.

Although it will take many years of strenuous endeavour to make holidays a habitual feature of the life of our workers, means can be made available for taking immediate action on a wide scale so that no section of the working class will remain untouched. A genuine interest in the welfare of the worker, flexible methods and spirit of co-operation are the principles underlying the measures to be taken. Holidays with pay should be regarded as a social matter affecting the welfare of the nation as a whole.

Some employers show a general and wise reluctance to do anything which might be interpreted as interference with the employees' free time, but, for the next few years, which are likely to be a transitory period towards a general enjoyment of holidays by industrial workers, there may be an actual

need for help from socially-minded employers. As the time is opportune to encourage employees to make the best use of their holidays with pay, it should not be impossible to secure the active support of our employers in a matter which is of vital importance to the health of our industrial workers.

THE ROLE OF INDUSTRIAL CANTEENS IN INDIA

SOME FACTS AND SOME THOUGHTS

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Mr. P. M. Isaac warns the country, especially the industrialists, that any production drive that may be launched would be in the nature of yet another advance into futility if it did not synchronise with a drive to feed the worker and feed him better. Canteens must be regarded as an integral part of the national crusade against malnutrition and socially conscious employers must readily accept their share of the responsibility. Worker needs better food but does not possess the wherewithal, in good measure, to buy it. Even if he had the means to buy it, he does not know a thing about what he ought to eat. A subsidised Canteen Service must be reckoned as a part of the return for service rendered by the worker to the employer and ultimately to the community.

THE CRY all the world over, today, is for food, more food and better food. World War II has left this deplorable legacy to mankind. Of the need to remove this malady of want, there can be no two opinions. World organisations have, therefore, been formed to tackle this vital global problem. All available knowledge on nutritional science has been brought to bear upon the problem—to feed the half starved and under-nourished people of the world.

In India, universal malnutrition and under-nourishment have affected the health and efficiency of millions of people. Even before World War II, the average Indian could not command a square meal. Now, the situation has assumed a serious dimension. Food being the first social need for health and efficiency, government have recognised the urgent need for raising the nutritional standards by all possible means at their disposal.

The Factories amendment Act 1947

At the Seventh Labour Conference, held in New Delhi in November 1945, a decision of far-reaching importance was taken. This decision was to amend the Factories Act 1934, so that Factories employing 250 or more would be required to provide *adequate* canteen facilities for workers. With a view to implementing this decision, the Central Legislature placed the Factories Amendment Act 1947, on the Statute Book.

It isn't a square meal at all

Ignorance about nutrition is colossal among the Indian working classes. As the Indian diet is normally based on tradition rather than on scientific facts, the workers do not know what to eat and how much to eat.

However good the working conditions and conditions of employment may be, the most important requirement for health and efficiency is a sufficient and well-balanced diet. The nutritional content of the food the average Indian worker consumes falls short of the requirements of health. Whereas the international scale of food (mentioned in the Report of the United Nations Conference on food and agriculture) is 58.5 oz. the diet of an average Indian worker is only 26 oz. The British Ministry of health recommends a diet yielding 3,000 calories, but the average industrial worker in

India consumes somewhere between 1,500 to 2,000 calories per day.

Even within this low intake, the proportion of protective food compares extremely unfavourably with that of the Japanese and the British worker who consumes 2,700 calories and 3,200 calories respectively (pre-war).

An enquiry into over 2,000 families of the Jute Mill workers in Bengal shows that the food consumed by an average worker is equivalent to 2,700 calories after allowing for wastage. But the kinds of food that go to make up this total differ greatly with different workers. Only about 60% get a square meal i.e. food consisting of two-thirds carbohydrates, one-sixth fats, one-sixth proteins and mineral salts, besides vitamins.

They are more lucky behind the bars!

Investigation into the family budgets of over 2,400 families conducted by the Bombay Labour Office reveals that the average adult male worker consumes less of almost every commodity than is prescribed for the inmates of Bombay jails!

The reasons for millions of people consuming much less than the minimum physiological needs are mainly two. First of all, India's total food supply is equivalent to 290 billion calories but her total requirements, if each were to have a square meal, are 376 billions. This shows that India's annual shortage in food is equivalent to 86 billion calories. No wonder the expectation of life in India is only 27, whereas in Japan it is 47, in the U.S.A. and Great Britain 62 and in New Zealand 67.

Secondly, this inadequate diet of the Indian worker is the direct outcome of his abysmally low purchasing power. Half-starved and under-nourished stomachs are mainly due to lean pockets. Better income for the worker and stable and cheap prices of food articles are the essential prerequisites of a balanced diet and the assured success of the Canteen movement.

The Employer cannot ignore his responsibility

The maxim that an army marches on its stomach is equally applicable to the army of industrial workers. Unless the soldiers of industry are properly fed, they cannot effectively put their shoulders to the wheels of industry. If industrial workers are to play their part, if their children, who are the

potential employees are to grow up as healthy and strong citizens, feeding the workers should be the responsibility of the employer, private or State.

One of the reasons for the Indian factory workers' inability to work long hours is projected by the physiological handicap—inadequacy of the diet, quantitative and qualitative.

Though higher incomes imply better nourishment to workers, there is no guarantee that this would be true in all cases. At times poor food habits, ignorance and even indifference are responsible for malnutrition.

Even if industrial workers can afford to have a balanced diet, not all of them have the facilities to procure what they want. It is not only not sufficient to advise the workers as to what they should eat, but it is of paramount importance to provide them with the right type of food. In this respect, the role of industrial canteens is very important.

The policy of every progressive employer should therefore be to ensure that his workmen are free from want and are afforded the right type of food. When once the principle that the provision of adequate canteen facilities forms an integral part of the returns accruing to workers, in the shape of money as well as what has come to be described as "real wages", for services rendered is accepted, then there should be little difficulty for employers to provide such facilities.

***Britain and
Australia
have shown
the way***

Nowhere the role of canteens has been so remarkable as in Great Britain during the recent war. Militarily and industrially Great Britain was taken unawares. Industrial production on an unprecedented scale was, however, achieved and the workers ultimately triumphed. This success, was largely attributable to well-planned welfare facilities on an enormous scale. Special interest was taken in feeding the workers within the factories. The canteen became industry's second power-house. In fact, it became an integral part of the industrial organisation itself. The war is over but the factory-canteen has come to stay.

The attempt of the Australian Government to feed the industrial workers during the war provides an object-lesson. The Government assumed responsibility for providing one

hot meal a day at the workplace. With centralised control and standardised cafeteria service, the scheme covered government munition factories, ship-building yards, naval establishments and coal mines. The Australian government planned, built and equipped the cafeterias, in addition to training canteen managers, supervisors, book-keepers, cooks etc.

The primary aim of the government was to provide a hot nutritious meal of a uniform standard throughout the Commonwealth, at a cost which the workers could afford. The standard menu consisted of "thick soup, a choice of three entrees, a choice of three sweets, a choice of three salads, potatoes and two vegetables, up to two slices of bread and butter, and tea or milk". Though the price of one complete meal was 1 Sh. 2d. one could purchase different units at stated prices. In other words, the complete meal was broken into several units, to provide inviting choice to the workers.

One admirable feature of the cafeteria system is "Self-service." Workers on entering the cafeteria proceed straight to the counter and collect what they want. This eliminates the necessity of engaging a number of servers to attend the tables, thereby effecting considerable economy.

Cafeteria or "Self-service" is not yet popular in India. But, in course of time, the prejudice against it is bound to disappear.

***Down South
in Travancore
and Cochin***

Coming to India, in Travancore, canteens have been established to supplement deficiency in authorised rations. Great care is taken to serve food cooked out of bajra, wheat, maize, jowar and other millets to tide over the rice shortage in the State.

With a view to popularising wheat and other unfamiliar grains, in Cochin State, which is one of the worst affected deficit food areas, the government started restaurants similar to British restaurants. These caught popular imagination so quickly in towns that the scheme was extended to villages. There are about sixty such restaurants now. They have virtually become demonstration centres to popularise unfamiliar food preparations.

***Canteens have
a definite
part to play***

Most of the industrial workers in India live far away from their places of work. They have neither the time nor the facilities to go home to take their meal. Industrial canteens

in India, therefore, have an useful and significant part to play in feeding the workers. Since the main objective is to raise the present nutritional standards, and one of the methods to achieve this is to supplement what the workers are able to get in their own homes by a well-balanced and low-priced noon-day meal, *the value of food supplied at canteens should be at least equal to, if not cheaper than, a meal consumed in the workers' own homes.*

Some notable private efforts

Considerable headway in providing hot meals at the factory premises at concessional rates has been made at present by some private concerns. The Tatas at Jamshedpur and the Sigcol in Calcutta are admirable examples. The Tatas are selling a full meal, consisting of rice, dal, curry and chapatis at *five pice* and the Sigcol canteen provides a good lunch to workers *free of cost*. In Madras, the P.Orr & Sons supply a cooked meal *free* to their workers during noon. The Century Spinning and Manufacturing Co., Ltd., Bombay, provide a cooked meal to 1,700 workers, each meal costing only *two annas*. The subsidy by the management to each of the above canteens must be considerable. It is this willingly accepted policy of subsidisation that has enabled some canteens to sell food-stuffs 40 to 60% lower than the market rates.

The employers' first reaction to the idea of setting up of industrial canteens is one of reluctance, if not of avowed hostility. The reasons are not far to seek. Canteens involve considerable nursing and supervision, especially in the initial stages, not to mention additional expenditure and responsibility. But those that have organised canteens have discovered that, in the long run, it is a paying proposition. Providing cheap, wholesome and nutritious food means better health and efficiency to the workers and increased output for the employers. Free the workers from want, and industry will put on a new face.

Proper canteen facilities can do much to help correct several of the prevailing "ills" of industry. Spectacular and immediate results should not, however, be expected. Health and efficiency are acquired gradually over a long period.

The canteen provides a place for workers to exchange thoughts. It blunts the edge of social barriers and prejudices and helps to foster social harmony. In these days when

hot meal a day at the workplace. With centralised control and standardised cafeteria service, the scheme covered government munition factories, ship-building yards, naval establishments and coal mines. The Australian government planned, built and equipped the cafeterias, in addition to training canteen managers, supervisors, book-keepers, cooks etc.

The primary aim of the government was to provide a hot nutritious meal of a uniform standard throughout the Commonwealth, at a cost which the workers could afford. The standard menu consisted of "thick soup, a choice of three entrees, a choice of three sweets, a choice of three salads, potatoes and two vegetables, up to two slices of bread and butter, and tea or milk." Though the price of one complete meal was 1 Sh. 2d. one could purchase different units at stated prices. In other words, the complete meal was broken into several units, to provide inviting choice to the workers.

One admirable feature of the cafeteria system is "Self-service." Workers on entering the cafeteria proceed straight to the counter and collect what they want. This eliminates the necessity of engaging a number of servers to attend the tables, thereby effecting considerable economy.

Cafeteria or "Self-service" is not yet popular in India. But, in course of time, the prejudice against it is bound to disappear.

***Down South
in Travancore
and Cochin***

Coming to India, in Travancore, canteens have been established to supplement deficiency in authorised rations. Great care is taken to serve food cooked out of bajra, wheat, maize, jowar and other millets to tide over the rice shortage in the State.

With a view to popularising wheat and other unfamiliar grains, in Cochin State, which is one of the worst affected deficit food areas, the government started restaurants similar to British restaurants. These caught popular imagination so quickly in towns that the scheme was extended to villages. There are about sixty such restaurants now. They have virtually become demonstration centres to popularise unfamiliar food preparations.

***Canteens have
a definite
part to play***

Most of the industrial workers in India live far away from their places of work. They have neither the time nor the facilities to go home to take their meal. Industrial canteens

in India, therefore, have an useful and significant part to play in feeding the workers. Since the main objective is to raise the present nutritional standards, and one of the methods to achieve this is to supplement what the workers are able to get in their own homes by a well-balanced and low-priced noon-day meal, *the value of food supplied at canteens should be at least equal to, if not cheaper than, a meal consumed in the workers' own homes.*

Some notable private efforts

Considerable headway in providing hot meals at the factory premises at concessional rates has been made at present by some private concerns. The Tatas at Jamshedpur and the Sigcol in Calcutta are admirable examples. The Tatas are selling a full meal, consisting of rice, dal, curry and chapatis at *five pice* and the Sigcol canteen provides a good lunch to workers *free of cost*. In Madras, the P.Orr & Sons supply a cooked meal *free* to their workers during noon. The Century Spinning and Manufacturing Co., Ltd., Bombay, provide a cooked meal to 1,700 workers, each meal costing only *two annas*. The subsidy by the management to each of the above canteens must be considerable. It is this willingly accepted policy of subsidisation that has enabled some canteens to sell food-stuffs 40 to 60% lower than the market rates.

The employers' first reaction to the idea of setting up of industrial canteens is one of reluctance, if not of avowed hostility. The reasons are not far to seek. Canteens involve considerable nursing and supervision, especially in the initial stages, not to mention additional expenditure and responsibility. But those that have organised canteens have discovered that, in the long run, it is a paying proposition. Providing cheap, wholesome and nutritious food means better health and efficiency to the workers and increased output for the employers. Free the workers from want, and industry will put on a new face.

Proper canteen facilities can do much to help correct several of the prevailing "ills" of industry. Spectacular and immediate results should not, however, be expected. Health and efficiency are acquired gradually over a long period.

The canteen provides a place for workers to exchange thoughts. It blunts the edge of social barriers and prejudices and helps to foster social harmony. In these days when

there is scarcity of food all over India, group feeding makes for economy.

The canteen, if it is to serve its purpose, should serve foods containing the right proportions of carbohydrates, fats and proteins. The greatest defect in industrial canteens in India, to day, is that food is not planned in a scientific manner. Very little attention is paid to the food contents of articles sold. If proper food is served in canteens, ignorance among workers of the value of planned nutritious food can be progressively dispelled. The canteen can set itself out as a practical demonstration centre for the dissemination of information regarding the value of good and wholesome food.

***Aids to
Canteen
Movement***

Since the government of India attach great importance to the provision of adequate canteen facilities for workers, they have arranged to place an off-the-ration quota of rationed food-stuffs for the benefit of canteens. The Food Department of the Government of India are also publishing, from time to time, a brochure, "Feeding the Worker", containing valuable information designed as an effective aid to the canteen movement. Another bulletin "Nutrition", published monthly, also provides a mine of information on the food contents of articles consumed in everyday life and the planning of scientific menus.

***The move-
ment gets
under way***

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, there were only a few canteens in undertakings owned or managed by the Central Government. These canteens supplied only tea and snacks. But early in 1942, as one of the positive measures to increase and sustain the morale of workers cooked food canteens received considerable attention. Since then, a steady progress has been maintained in Central, Provincial as well as private undertakings.

According to a rough estimate, in Central Government undertakings, there were in 1944 :—

Food canteens	...	...	69
Tea & Refreshment canteens	...	...	70
Tea canteens	...	...	9
Unclassified	...	...	20
		Total	168

The management set-up of these canteens was as under :—

Workers	...	...	10
Employers	...	...	18
Joint	...	...	8
Contractors	...	...	105
Indian Tea Market Expansion Board	...	...	13
Others (Information not available)	...	...	14
		Total	168

(The above figures do not include canteens in Railway undertakings and Ordnance Factories).

The movement Promises to take roots and spread

The progress made in private undertakings is also noteworthy. The latest figures show that there are nearly 1,100 canteens (both private and government) catering to about 11 lakhs of workers. Among these, nearly a third are serving cooked food while the remaining serve tea and snacks. For a country of this magnitude, the progress made is probably infinitesimal, but it could confidently be hoped that the canteen movement will gather momentum with the enactment of the recent legislation, making the provision of canteen facilities more or less a statutory obligation on the part of the employer.

A number of factors have to be considered before deciding upon the type of canteen to be organised and the range of food articles to be sold. Some of the vital considerations are—distance of the undertaking from the workers' residential areas—if workers lived close-by they prefer to go home during lunch time—suitable location, size of the canteen, religious and caste susceptibilities, tastes of the workers etc.

Naturally enough, experts in India are not agreed on the type and quantity of food that is required by an average Indian worker. The country is so vast and the dietary habits differ so much from province to province that it is not easy to prescribe a single standard.

Subsidise the Canteens

One thing that does not fail to arrest the attention of students of nutrition is the almost total absence of protective foods such as milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables, fish etc., in the diet of the Indian worker. To an average worker, the first two items are a dream—luxury in view of

the prohibitive prices. If protective foods are to be placed within the reach of the ordinary worker, in my opinion, liberal subsidy is more than essential.

A cross-section of the management set-up of the existing canteens in India reveals five types; employers, workers, employers and workers jointly, contractors or the Indian Tea Market Expansion Board.

**Must be run
as an item of
"Employee
Services"**

Experience has proved that the most successful canteens, are those managed by the employers. If the canteens are to be reckoned as an item of what has come to be called "employee services" there is a good case for employer-run canteens. The system of contractor-run canteens has little or nothing to commend it. The Rege Committee point out in their report that maximum profit is the sole aim of the contractor, who is there by virtue of being the highest bidder for the contract. Rebates paid to the management by contractors are charged to workers as high prices or bad food at low prices. Carbohydrate foods, which usually bring the maximum profit, are sold instead of health-promoting and body-building foods. Dissatisfaction and complaints are a common feature. In spite of supervision, control and restrictions by the management, the contractors can always adopt clever subterfuges to evade them. Contractors cannot be expected to display any interest in the active promotion of the health or the efficiency of the workers.

**Indian Tea
Market
Expansion
Board**

The help rendered by the Indian Tea Market Expansion Board in organising and setting up of canteens on behalf of the employers and thereby participating in the canteen movement and that without any financial interest, has been invaluable. Some of the best-run canteens in India, today, owe their present standing to the initial assistance rendered by the Indian Tea Market Expansion Board. The Board hands over the canteen as a running concern to the management after organising it on sound lines and training the necessary staff.

Research on the results of improved eating facilities for the working class has not been so far undertaken on a large scale in India. But experiments carried out by a Canadian firm indicate that over a period of three years, after opening a lunch room, there was a fall of 27% in First Aid treatments and 14% in lost-time accidents.

“Produce or Perish” Feed and Produce

On all sides, it is now agreed that India must “produce or perish”. On this showing, provision of canteen facilities, and thereby better nutrition, forms one of the unignorable primary items in a country-wide production drive.

Any production drive based on indifference towards, or ignoring the physical health and well-being of the man behind the machine, is wrong and not likely to succeed. If the industrial future of India is to be built on a stable foundation, the worker cannot be allowed to remain a weak link in the chain of production.

The task of creation and maintenance of conditions conducive to a stable canteen movement must be accepted by the State as a definite charge; the running of canteens must be accepted by the employer as a national investment.

SECTION II
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Contributors

Gulzarilal Nanda
V. M. Tarkunde
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Sir James Doak

WHAT GANDHIJI HAS DONE FOR INDIAN LABOUR

NEW TECHNIQUE IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

GULZARILAL NANDA

Minister for Labour, Bombay

Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, avers that in his stupendous, and now successful, fight for India's emancipation, Gandhiji has cleared the path for the Working-class to march forward to its destiny. In revitalising the nation and creating a pulsating atmosphere of "High hope and great endeavour", Gandhiji has taught the Indian Working-Class to stand up and fight for its rights. Shri. Nanda rightly hails Gandhiji as India's first Labour Leader. The South African campaign was a campaign for the recognition of the fundamental rights of migrant Indian Labour in that country. Back in India, he plunged into the historic Ahmedabad textile labour struggle, as its fountain-head of inspiration and accredited leader. His first

fast was undertaken as a weapon in this classic strike to bring home to the employers the utility of arbitration for the settlement of industrial disputes, a tradition and a method which continues to be honoured by the two sides of the Ahmedabad Textile Industry even today. Gandhiji developed a new technique in industrial relations. The Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association is a standing demonstration of what is possible with Gandhian Labour Philosophy as the mainspring of thought and policy.

Gandhiji's twin-crusade against Drink and Untouchability is continuously and in an ever-widening circle bringing light and colour into the lives of the work people. His Khadi campaign, which is, in effect, the centre-piece of a movement for a New Deal for the village artisan has touched innumerable workers in rural areas scattered all over the country.

In his attempt to narrow the hiatus between the so-called upper-classes and the masses Gandhiji has released social forces of immense potency, forces calculated to promote a social order in which a man's social usefulness would be his title for life.

WHAT HAS GANDHIJI NOT DONE FOR INDIAN LABOUR ?

I DON'T find myself equal to the task of putting in words or figures the magnitude of the debt which the working class in India owes to Mahatma Gandhi. His personal share in building up the labour movement is large. The material gains which labour has secured as a result of his direct help are numerous. Of much deeper significance and of far greater value are, however, what may be described as his indirect services and "intangible" contribution to the cause of labour in India. He has given labour a clear view of its true goal and lighted up its path. By his stupendous activity for the nation, as a whole, he has also cleared the way of the working class for marching forward to its destination.

**Gandhiji's
multi-pronged
campaign for
emancipation**

We may first consider the indirect succour which Gandhiji has rendered to the workers, through the movement of freedom, led by him for nearly three decades, now crowned with success. It is a familiar fact that the birth and early growth of the labour movement in India almost synchronized with the first political campaign in India started by Gandhiji. This was no mere coincidence. Gandhiji's country-wide agitation was marked by a spirit of revolt against unjust and irresponsible authority. Labour witnessed, and was, in many places, drawn into, the mass demonstrations of these times. It could not remain unaffected by the prevailing atmosphere of high hope and great endeavour. Labour was made to feel that the lowly too had rights, and that, it was possible for them to stand up for those rights. The psychological as well as the social barriers which had held up the onward march of labour, began to crumble down as Gandhiji's multi-pronged campaign went sweeping ahead. It might have been years—it is difficult to say how many—before labour in India could have made itself articulate if Gandhiji had not intervened with his all-round programme for the emancipation of the Indian Nation.

**The
'Out-siders'
so-called
were the
Pioneers**

Gandhiji mobilized a strong force of "intellectuals" and middle class youths to perform the hundreds of tasks which he set before the nation. In this, the labour movement secured a ready-made source of pioneers, leaders and helpers. So conspicuous was the part which the political intellectuals played in the early days that in the case of a strike, the self-justification of an employer was considered complete, the

moment he uttered the words "outside agitators" and "political motives", whatever might have been the grievances, which caused the dislocation of work. The contacts thus established and the awakening created among the workers could have easily been used for feeding the agitation and unrest of those days, even at the risk of causing a degree of embarrassment to the workers and injury to their immediate interests. Gandhiji did not allow such a tendency to manifest itself. He has, however, all along kept up his insistence that national workers should interest themselves in the welfare of the working class, and miss no opportunity of helping it to remove its industrial and social handicaps.

The two Evils— Drink and Untouchability

It will need too much space to record here the benefits which labour has derived from the manifold activities of Gandhiji in the social sphere. Two items deserve special mention—Prohibition and Untouchability Removal. Only those who have seen it can have an idea of the havoc wrought by liquor, among the poor toilers who fall a prey to it. I have witnessed the woes of the women, the piteous plight of the children, the tightening grip of disease and death, and the progressive damage to the moral fibre, for which the drink evil is answerable. There are no words to describe the depths of degradation and helplessness to which working class families sink on this account. Under the influence of liquor, the worker—and this is of the gravest consequence from the standpoint of the working class—proves to be his own worst enemy, in his struggle with the forces which are bearing him down; liquor leads the workers into wrong ways and destroys the only means which they possess for their deliverance viz., their solidarity and their power of resistance.

To overcome this menace, Gandhiji initiated and vigorously pursued the Prohibition Campaign as an important item of the national programme. It was because of his personal interest and insistence that the Congress Ministries pressed forward with measures of Prohibition, and big industrial centres like Bombay and Ahmedabad were declared to be dry areas. The Ahmedabad Prohibition Research Advisory Board appointed by the Government of Bombay made a unanimous report that the scheme of Prohibition, enforced in that area, had succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations and had resulted in an enormous material and moral benefit for the working class.

Gandhiji's work for the removal of untouchability has no small bearing on the progress of the labour movement in this country. Almost all the so-called untouchables belong to the labouring community and form a large proportion of it. They are the most down-trodden section of labour. Gandhiji's incessant endeavour in their behalf has rid them of many disabilities, particularly in the urban areas, and has brought much strength to the labour movement by closing up, to a considerable extent, this breach in its ranks.

**Narrowing
down of the
hiatus
between the
intelligentsia
and the
masses**

By his own shining example, by bringing into vogue simpler modes of living, by the dress reform he has introduced, by rehabilitating Indian languages, and in a score of other ways, Gandhiji has gone far in bridging the gulf between the intelligentsia and the working masses. His constant advocacy of the claims of the poor, his stress on the dignity of labour and his propagation of the ideas of economic, social and political equality, have done a great deal to promote the peaceful social process, which would through a progressive levelling up and down, eliminate the disparities of wealth and power and establish a harmonious social order.

**Championed
Indian labour
in South
Africa**

Gandhiji's direct personal association with the labour movement dates from the days of his stay in South Africa. That country was in need of workers to develop her economic life. India had spare man power. For years, a stream of indentured Indian Labour flowed to South Africa and other Colonies. The Indian labourer who was found to be a useful helper in the earlier stages came, in course of time, to be viewed by the white settlers in the light of a dangerous rival. In all these regions, the Indian labourer was compelled to submit to exceedingly bad social and economic conditions, but the political disabilities assumed the worst form in South Africa. Gandhiji came on this scene and started preparing the Indian community for organised resistance of the passive and peaceful kind. The prominent stake in this case was the human rights of the immigrants of whom the large bulk consisted of Indian labourers. Gandhiji launched a series of campaigns in which the Indian community courted imprisonment and suffered severe hardships. At one stage, thousands of Indian labourers in coal mines laid down tools and went on strike, smarting under the wrong and humiliation of the £3 *Head Tax* which indentured

labourers were liable to pay. The strike spread to the plantations. It was suppressed by force causing injury and death to a number of labourers. About 6,000 labourers joined Gandhiji in the Great March of which the objective was to set at naught the Government ban on the entry of Indians into Transval. The passive resisters stood their ground in the face of brutal treatment and unspeakable sufferings, before starvation, disease, and death, they did not quail. The £3 tax was repealed, and, for the moment, the other immediate objectives of the movement were attained. This was a grand exhibition of moral force displayed by masses of ignorant and illiterate labourers under the guidance and inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi. The struggle in South Africa has rightly been treated as a heroic phase in the history of the Indian labour movement.

**Gandhiji— the
First Labour
Leader**

Gandhiji may be counted, in a real sense, as the first leader of the Indian labour movement. Gandhiji was the first to espouse the cause of Indian labour, stationed in a foreign land, and the first to lead it in an organized fight on a mass scale. Back in India, he again found himself right in the midst of the working class and at the head of a labour struggle of such proportions and importance as had never been witnessed in the past in this country. This happened in Ahmedabad in March 1918. The local textile industry was already big enough to employ half a lakh of workers. The weavers had asked for a rise in wages in view of the heavy increase in the cost of living owing to the conditions created by the world war. The employers, not willing to go beyond a small concession, declared a lock-out of all the employees. Gandhiji examined every aspect of the question, and came to the conclusion that the workers were entitled to an additional remuneration to the extent of 35%. The millowners were adamant in their refusal to consider this proposal and would not go to arbitration. Gandhiji advised the workers that it was their duty to resist unbending arbitrary authority, to their last breath. The workers took a solemn pledge that they would not resume work in the mills till their just demand was accepted. Gandhiji planned every detail of the struggle and took charge of its conduct from day to day. He addressed a daily meeting of the workers and issued a pamphlet everyday containing information and directions for the workers. A time came after

about a fortnight—when owing to the propaganda of the millowners and the various devices employed by them for demoralizing the ranks of the workers, a section began to show signs of weakness. This came about partly on account of the strain of hunger and privations. Gandhiji could not brook the idea of even a single person turning away from his pledge, because of want. He decided to go without food himself. Thus began his first historic fast. It was intended to be of indefinite duration. During this period, arrangements were made to relieve the hardships of the workers by providing them with alternative temporary employment. The building operations just then started for housing Gandhiji's Ashram at Sabarmati, became the means of placing in the hands of workers a few pice a-day. Gandhiji's fast had not progressed far when the millowners were moved to revise their attitude to save Gandhiji's life. They accepted arbitration and the workers eventually obtained an increase in wages to the full extent of 35%. Gandhiji's fast meanwhile raised the labour question in the country to the plane of a national issue of outstanding importance.

The Ahmedabad Textile Association

The bond which was then created between Gandhiji and Labour in Ahmedabad has been growing stronger with the passage of time. He has directed numerous fights of the workers since then. He inaugurated their unions early in the year 1920 and tended them with care during their period of infancy. It is largely due to his help, aid and counsel that the Ahmedabad Labour Association occupies its present pre-eminent position in the country.

The achievements of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association are of special significance as furnishing a test of the efficacy of Gandhiji's ideas with regard to the conduct of the labour movement. It would not be out of place, therefore, to give a brief outline of the position and activities of this organisation.

The Association has, at present, a record membership of 65,003 textile workers, who pay in their dues regularly at each wage payment. The income of the Association on account of membership fees amounted to nearly Rs. 2½ lakhs during the year 1944-45. The Association has arranged for the study and progressive record of the working and living conditions of the labouring community in the city. Complaints from individuals or group of workers are recorded,

investigated and attended to. The Association receives about 7,000 such complaints each year. Negotiations with the authorities concerned are conducted by personal interviews for the most part. When private settlement is not reached, full use is made of the conciliation machinery provided under the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act. The Association always insists on recourse to arbitration in cases of disagreement to avoid direct action. A strike is declared when there is no other course open. Each strike becomes an occasion for setting up an elaborate campaign. The preparation for it as well as its actual conduct make very large demands on the moral and material resources of the Association. The aim is to keep up a non-violent atmosphere, preserve the morale of the workers, combat strike-breaking activities, and to bring to bear social and moral pressure on the employers, so that they may agree to refer the disputes to arbitration or adjudication.

The Association assists the workers in obtaining their due under various legislative enactments, including the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Maternity Benefit Act. It provides legal aid for its members, and renders such help during strikes as circumstances may permit. The workers who are victimized by the employers for trade union activity are provided due relief.

The Association now maintains about 20 social centres which cater to the intellectual and social needs of the working class in the neighbourhood of each centre, by setting up libraries and reading rooms, and by providing facilities for physical culture and recreation. It conducts 6 Day Schools and 2 Night Schools. Hostel accommodation is provided for working class girls to pursue their studies in the various educational institutions in the city. There is a Bal Mandir which attends to the needs of 65 children. Homes for students have been opened in the labour residential areas to furnish accommodation, instruction, and cultural background for young working class boys. Scholarships are made available to working class students receiving education in Secondary Schools.

The Association has also a well equipped Dispensary with an average annual attendance of 75,747. Arrangements are made to secure admission in the local hospitals for those

workers who are in need of indoor treatment. A programme of opening maternity huts in different wards, arranging for medical examination of the workers and their dependents and for supplying systematic health education has been adopted and is making satisfactory progress.

The Association endeavours to promote co-operative credit and provide facilities for savings in deposit accounts. It is running a Khadi Bhandar and a general store of which the annual sale amounts to about Rs. 2,10,000.

It makes continuous endeavour to assist the workers in securing their civic rights and discharging their civic responsibilities. Nearly 500 complaints of neglect and inattention to civic needs of working class families or localities, on the part of the Municipality, are dealt with every year. The Association participates in municipal elections and endeavours to secure adequate representation for the working class on the local body. In the last elections, labour secured 19 seats out of 52 on the General Board of the Ahmedabad Municipality. The Association has its own press. About 3,00,000 copies of the "Majur Sandesh" the fortnightly organ of the Association, are issued for circulation. Small pamphlets touching the needs and problems of the workers are brought out from time to time. The word of mouth, however, occupies a far more important place in the trade union and social propaganda carried on by the Association. Arrangements exist for the collection of the relevant facts and figures which is an essential trade union activity.

Through the efforts of the Association, organizational work has been promoted in various textile centres in the Province and outside. The Unions in these places obtain from the Association such help and advice as they need. The membership of these associated organizations exceeds 20,000.

The affairs of the Association are governed by Boards composed of the elected representatives of the workers who are members of the Association. These Boards are re-constituted every two years, after completing an elaborate procedure of elections to ensure the proper exercise of the workers' democratic choice in the compositions of their

Governing Body. About 838 representatives sit on these Boards. They elect the executive and the other committees. There were in the year 1943-44 about 106 meetings of the elected bodies. To attend to all this work, the Association has maintained a paid staff of 236 persons at present.

**Gandhiji's
benevolent
hand has
touched the
Army of
scattered
workers in
villages**

It should cause no surprise if I reckon as part of Gandhiji's work for labour his exertions to promote the handicrafts of the country of which khadi still remains the centre as well as the symbol. Through Khadi, Gandhiji has extended his helping hand to a very large but scattered mass of workers whose plight is incomparably worse than that of the industrial workers in the towns. They suffer in ignorant and helpless silence. The only feature which relieves the dark misery of their existence is that it covers a brief span. The activities of the All India Spinners Association bring a measure of relief direct to about 3 lakhs of persons in the rural areas.

The personal ministrations of Gandhiji could not, in the nature of things, extend beyond a section of the Indian working class; but the beneficent influence of his work for labour has travelled to every place where men, women, and children toil in this country. Every labourer and every sympathiser of labour can have access to the body of ideas evolved and applied by Gandhiji through a quarter of a century, on the basis of the doctrines of *Truth* and *Non-violence*.

PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

THE RADICALS' APPROACH

V. M. TARKUNDE, Bar-At-Law

General Secretary, Radical Democratic Party of India

Political differences and warring political ideologies should not be suffered to fragment the Trade Union Movement into, more or less, vertical and hostile camps. It is wrong to exploit and divide Trade Unions for political or party ends. Trade Union leadership should be inspired by a desire to create a thirst for democracy, for freedom, among the working classes. Trade Union activities should be conducted in the context of a cultural movement for freedom of the common man. Class-consciousness and the fissiparous class-appeal do not afford the "lever for creating a free society of men". Any political party which wants to emerge as a genuine friend of the proletariat must educate it in the spirit of freedom and self-reliance.

This is the stand of the Radical Democrats according to Mr. V. M. Tarkunde. Trade Union Unity and independence must be preserved if the objective is to lead the working-classes into developing their solidarity in order that they may resist totalitarian and fascist tendencies wherever they may be found and "attain power and rule over themselves".

RADICALISM was introduced in Indian politics by M. N. Roy. It has never been a closed system of political dogmas. It claims to be loyal only to science and reason. Its history began with Roy's differences with the Communist International in 1928 and even earlier; and it has developed during the course of the last twenty years into a clearly defined social philosophy and political theory and practice, distinct from Communism as well as Nationalism. Not being a set system of ideas, its impact on the Indian labour movement will have to be examined side by side with its own development in the sphere of political ideology and practice. For this purpose, the period under review can be conveniently divided into three stages—the period before the war, the period of the war and the Indian constitutional deadlock, and the present trends following upon the constitutional settlement.

**The Pre-war
Period:
Mr. Roy's
differences
with the
Communist
International**

Roy initially disagreed with two tendencies in the Communist International. One was the tendency to decide the tactics of the Communist International in the light of the immediate short-term requirements of Russia as a State, without due thought to the interests of the working class in different parts of the world. This tendency, which has developed by now into a full-fledged Russian nationalism, and has transformed Communist parties everywhere into agents of Russia, was in evidence from the beginning. It induced the Communist International to adopt what Roy considered to be a wrong approach to the anti-imperialist movements in colonial countries, including the nationalist movement in India. Since these movements were directed against imperialism, particularly British imperialism, which was the enemy of Soviet Russia, the Communist International regarded them as wholly progressive, despite the fact that they were led by reactionary capitalist classes of the colonial countries. That is to say, the colonial bourgeoisie was looked upon as, in some measure, a progressive and even a revolutionary class. From the point of view of the exploited masses in the colonies, including the workers, this approach was obviously wrong, and Roy protested against it. He pointed out that the Indian capitalist class cannot play a progressive role; that under its leadership the Indian

nationalist movement was likely to be transformed into virtually a fascist movement; that already the movement had begun to adopt a reactionary ideology by developing racialism, religious revivalism and blind faith; and that the duty of the Communists in India was to rescue the movement from its upper-class leadership by advocating a broad programme of democratic revolution based on the demands for abolition of Zamindari, State control of industry, and establishment of a fully democratic people's state. Roy pointed out that British imperialism was itself being compelled by circumstances to compromise with the Indian bourgeoisie and to create an Indo-British capitalist combine, which will mean the eventual grant of Dominion Status to India and the "de-colonisation" of the country, without contributing in the least, to the liberation of the Indian masses. This theory of "de-colonisation" was the main difference which led Roy to part company with the Communist International.

The second tendency which caused the parting of ways was Communist sectarianism. It led the Communist International to pass a series of resolutions in 1928 with which Roy disagreed. One such resolution directed Communists to force a split between "reformist" and "revolutionary" trade unions and to form separate "red" trade unions. Roy felt that it was wrong to divide the trade unions on such an issue, particularly when the danger of fascism was looming on the horizon. Another resolution directed Communists in colonial countries like India to strive for a "proletarian revolution" under working-class leadership. This according to Roy, was wholly unrealistic. In a predominantly agricultural country like India, where the industrial working class was a small minority, it was idle to talk of a proletarian dictatorship. What was required was a broad-based democratic movement comprising the peasants, workers and the impoverished middle classes, and deriving its leadership from these sections of society. By the way, the Communist insistence on proletarian dictatorship was inconsistent with their view that the Indian capitalist class had a revolutionary part to play. Roy disagreed with both these extreme and mutually contradictory positions.

These differences had a practical bearing on both political and trade union policy. Roy returned to India incognito in

1930, and after a few months of comparative freedom was arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In those few months he succeeded in creating a small group of devoted political workers who understood and appreciated his point of view. These came to be known as Royists and later as Radicals.

Radicals forge Trade Union Unity

Radicals started working in the trade union movement in 1930. By that time the Communists had already forced a split in the trade union movement. Due to sectarian Communist policy, the Liberals were required to leave the Trade Union Congress in 1929 and form a separate organisation, the National Federation of Trade Unions. Radicals started their work in the T.U.C. with a programme of unity, which received the support of a number of trade unionists. The Communists promptly tried to bring about a second split in the T.U.C. in 1931, but were outvoted; whereupon they left the parent body and started the Red Trade Union Congress. Thus the impact of political differences on the trade union movement was to create three central organisations. The Radicals, however, continued their efforts for unity. The Red T.U.C. never gained any strength. In three or four years the Communists dissolved the Red T.U.C. and rejoined the parent body. Later, in 1938, the N.F.T.U. of the Liberals and the T.U.C. amalgamated in the All India Trade Union Congress. The Radical programme of trade union unity was thus wholly successful.

The Radical Scene

In the political field, Radicals followed a policy consistent with their theoretical position, that India stood in need of a broad democratic movement based on the economic and political demands of the peasants, workers and the middle classes. They saw in the Indian National Congress a movement which was led by an upper-class leadership and was increasingly given to a racial and revivalist ideology. The Radicals distinguished between the leadership and the rank and file of the Congress. They joined the Congress with the declared intention of popularising a genuinely democratic ideology and programme amongst ordinary Congress members, so that, by the pressure of an enlightened membership, the Congress may evolve a democratic leadership and an adequate socio-political programme. The Communists, in pursuance of the resolution of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International held in 1928, had left the Congress

and condemned it as a bourgeois organisation. In 1935, however, the Seventh Congress of the Communist International scrapped most of the resolutions of the Sixth Congress, and soon, thereafter, Indian Communists changed their tactics and joined the Indian National Congress. But by now they had swung to the other extreme of regarding the Indian bourgeoisie as an anti-imperialist and revolutionary class. They, therefore, advocated "national unity," and stood against all attempts to develop an alternate democratic leadership in the nationalist movement. That was also the position of the Congress Socialists, who had formed themselves into a party in 1934. Consequently, no concerted attempts could be made to rescue the nationalist movement from its orthodox, upper-class, and potentially totalitarian leadership. That remained the position till the war commenced.

War and the Indian constitutional Deadlock

The war provided an acid test to the democratic professions of the political parties and groups in India. From the very beginning, Radicals pointed out that a war against fascism could not possibly be an imperialist war. When the 'phoney' stage of the war was over, and the Chamberlain Government in Great Britain was replaced by a more definitely pro-war cabinet, the Radicals (who were then working in the Congress as the League of Radical Congressmen) declared themselves in favour of supporting the war and started anti-fascist propaganda in the country. They celebrated an All-India Anti-Fascist Day, which action was regarded by the Congress High Command as a breach of discipline. Several Radical Congressmen were expelled from the Congress or their membership suspended. Thereupon, they all left the Congress in a body and formed the Radical Democratic Party in December 1940.

Radicals were aware that this stand ran counter to the strong current of nationalist sentiment in the country; yet they felt that that was the only stand which a democratic body could take and that it alone served the interests of the Indian masses. It is clear by now that their attitude was correct; for if the last war were indeed an imperialist war, then British imperialism, having won it, should have been strengthened and not weakened by it. But we find that it has been not only weakened but virtually liquidated. This

is exactly what the Radicals had contended from the beginning. They based their attitude of war-support on two incontestable propositions: Firstly, if fascism succeeded, India with the rest of the world would become fascist and the hopes of establishing democracy in India would vanish into thin air; and secondly, British imperialism was bound to be liquidated during the course of the war on account of inevitable economic and political changes, so that if Great Britain won the war, power was bound to be transferred in India. Radicals, therefore, felt that there was no longer any logical justification for a 'nationalist' movement in India; its only function would be to side with international fascism, and if the United Nations won the war, to claim power in the name of the Indian people but essentially to a coterie of upper-class totalitarian leadership. Radicals decided to dissociate themselves from the nationalist movement, and to develop an independent democratic movement with the hope that it may become strong enough to claim power for the common people of India and establish a genuinely social-democratic state in the country.

None of the other parties took this clear stand on principle. The Congress opposed the war so long as the Axis Powers were in the ascendant; it started supporting the war after the scales had turned definitely in favour of the United Nations. The Muslim League remained neutral throughout. The Congress Socialists opposed the war till the end and are unwilling even now to admit that British Imperialism is being liquidated. The Communists denounced the war as an imperialist war until, six months after Hitler's attack on Russia, they realised that it was a people's war.

Political differences have repercussions on Trade Union Movement

These differences had their repercussion on the trade union movement. The majority of the leaders of the A.I.T.U.C. were nationalist in sentiment. Consequently, the A.I.T.U.C. passed a resolution on the war which amounted to its supporting the attitude of war-resistance adopted by the Indian National Congress. Moreover, a number of unions affiliated to the A.I.T.U.C. were persuaded to precipitate a series of strikes which, from the point of view of the workers involved, were economic in character, but which were brought about by the leaders with a political motive, viz. that of opposing the war effort. Radicals protested against this misuse of

trade unions. They felt that it was wrong to utilise industrial disputes for political purposes. Moreover, they were strongly of opinion that the A.I.T.U.C., if it were a genuine trade union organisation, could not take the same attitude to the war as the Indian National Congress. The possible success of fascism would mean the extermination of trade unionism itself. Faced with that imminent danger, every genuine trade unionist must be keenly interested in promoting war effort against fascism. These views did not find favour with the A.I.T.U.C. which was dominated by nationalism. Radicals pointed out that nationalism was not the ideology of the working class; that a nationalist ideology persuades the workers to accept an upper-class leadership and also isolates it from the working class movement of the world; and that, by adopting a virtually anti-war attitude, the A.I.T.U.C. was breaking the international solidarity of the working class.

The Genesis of the Indian Federation of Labour

For these reasons, and because the situation was critical, Radicals decided to form an independent trade union organisation - independent of the nationalist current in the country which they felt was essentially fascist. In the meantime, however, Nazi Germany launched an attack on Russia, and a hope arose that the A.I.T.U.C. may still take a democratic and anti-fascist stand. Radicals placed a resolution to that effect before the General Council of the A.I.T.U.C.; but the resolution was lost, even the Communists not supporting it. Hence the Radicals went ahead with their plans and convened the Anti-Fascist Labour Conference in Lahore in December 1941, which founded the Indian Federation of Labour. A large number of unions affiliated themselves to the I.F.L. and new unions were formed; so the I.F.L. soon became a strong central organisation of Indian labour.

The Stand of the I.F.L.

The I.F.L. was not concerned only with the danger of fascist aggression from abroad. It was even more acutely conscious of the rise of fascism on the home front. The Radical Democratic Party and the I.F.L. felt that if the labour movement remained a hand-maid of the Indian National Congress, nothing could be done to challenge the ambition of the upperclass totalitarian leadership to step into the shoes of fading British imperialism. The A. I. T. U. C. was not only oblivious to that danger, but those who worked in that organisation - Communists, Congressmen and the few remaining

Liberals vied with each other in supporting nationalist jingoism. On the eve of the vital elections which took place in India in the winter of 1945-46, several unions affiliated to the A. I. T. U. C. participated in a series of political strikes and demonstrations, and helped to create that emotionally surcharged atmosphere in which the election triumph of the Indian National Congress was ensured. The I. F. L. felt that no unity in the trade union movement was possible so long as the A. I. T. U. C. allowed its unions to be utilised for a political purpose hostile to the interests of the working class.

Some fundamental principles of trade unionism emerge from this split in the Indian trade union movement. Trade unionists generally recognise, at least in theory, that it is essential to preserve the unity of their movement. Divided into several rival unions, workers are unable to gather strength to protect and advance their immediate economic interests. Accordingly, unity of the labour movement is generally regarded as the fundamental principle of trade unionism. Yet, in practice, political issues and party interests have tended from time to time to disrupt this unity. Is it necessary that this should happen?

Radical View: Trade Union Unity despite Political Differences Radicals emphasise that trade unions are essentially organs for collective bargaining with employers. As such, they are reformist organisations. Their purpose is to promote and protect the immediate economic interests of the working class by negotiation, and when necessary (and *also* possible) by strike action. They function within the ambit of the prevailing social order. Their only contact with normal politics consists of initiating and supporting legislation to reform the workers' conditions of life and work. Moreover, when their very existence is threatened by the rise of totalitarianism, they will be interested in protecting themselves against the danger. They will stand for freedom of thought, speech and organisation. But apart from their interest in civil liberties and labour legislation, they are not concerned, as trade unions, in other issues of political power, and it is wrong to utilise them or to divide them on such issues.

It is evident, at the same time, that the present social order imposes a severe limit on the possibility of reforming the workers' lot by trade union action. Therefore, it is natural and necessary that workers, individually, take

interest in politics. The workers may perhaps join different political parties ; but this need not cause a split in the trade union movement if none of the parties is interested in utilising trade unions *as such* for its own political advancement. If the internal functioning of trade unions is truly democratic, and if all the political parties interested in trade unionism have a democratic outlook, the trade union movement will remain united despite political differences.

Regimentation of Working Class is what Radicals oppose

The trade union movement has been split from time to time because, on the one hand, Indian workers have remained culturally backward and unaccustomed to the democratic way of life, and on the other, political parties in India have tended to regiment the working class and utilize it to augment their political strength. If the trade union movement in India were democratic in outlook and functioning, the A. I. T. U. C. could hardly have adopted the attitude it did towards the war and the Indian constitutional question and the Radicals would have felt no necessity of a separate trade union organisation. But the tradition of Indian trade unionism is demagogy and not democracy. The tradition requires to be broken. Radicals emphasise that democracy must be the basis of *any* organisation, including trade unions. To say so is not to 'introduce politics in trade unionism'. For democracy is essentially a cultural concept. It is based on freedom of thought and individual dignity. It is opposed to dictatorship in political as well as economic organisations. The way to bring about trade union unity is, therefore, to promote the urge for freedom and democracy in the working class. This is what the Radicals have been striving to do, and this brings them into clash with those whose political practice favours the regimentation of the working class.

The present Trends

During recent years, Radicalism in India has been developing into a distinct political philosophy. It can no longer be regarded as a dissentient school of Communists. It disagrees with totalitarianism in any form, whether it emerges from Rightists or Leftists. The last All-India Conference of the Radical Democratic Party, in December 1946, adopted the "Fundamental Principles of Radicals in Democracy", which will guide the work of Radicals in political and trade union fields. While a description of these principles is not possible here, some indication of the distinctive features of

Radicalism is necessary for ascertaining how it will react on the labour movement.

The goal of Radicalism is individual freedom. A rising standard of living is essential for the freedom of the individual. But the ideal of freedom goes beyond this. It comprises man's desire for an enlightened and cultured life. A free society will be a society of individuals who will be free economically, politically and culturally.

Radical Way of Looking at Things

Radicals believe that the ideal of freedom cannot be attained by the mere economic transformation of society. Freedom will not follow in the wake of State-ownership of the means of production, if the State itself continues to be the monopoly of a few individuals. Economic democracy is not possible in the absence of political democracy. And political democracy cannot be realised if the people themselves are not inspired by the urge to freedom. So long as they remain culturally backward, given to hero-worship and liable to be deceived by demagogy, unable to rely on themselves and inclined to submission, they will also remain politically enslaved and economically exploited. Radicalism, therefore, regards that its main task is to promote the spirit of freedom amongst the people. Moreover, it insists that the R. D. P. will be inconsistent with its principles if it were to strive for the attainment of power. Its object must be to raise the people to the level where they can attain power and rule over themselves.

It follows that Radicalism does not believe that class-consciousness can be the lever for creating a free society of freemen. In truth, the proletariat, being culturally backward, cannot as a class assume the leadership of a movement for freedom, which embraces cultural as well as economic values. Radicalism relies not upon the class appeal, but upon the moral "humanist" appeal. It looks upon the workers, not as beasts of burden who require to be only fed and housed, but as whole human beings.

Three Central Organisations

Radicals will carry on their political and trade union activities in the context of a cultural movement for freedom. They find that the trade union movement is being split up into rival factions on issues which have nothing to do with the progress of the workers. Till a few months ago, there were only two central organisations of trade unions, of more or

less equal strength, the I. F. L. and the A. I. T. U. C. The latter has now broken up into several factions. Right-wing Congressmen have launched the All India National Trade Union Congress; Congress Socialists have declared in favour of forming a separate trade union organisation of their own, but it seems likely that they will walk back into the nationalist fold; what will remain of the A. I. T. U. C. will go with Communists. Thus, apart from the I. F. L. which insists on democracy being the basis of genuine trade unionism, there will be at least two central and rival organisations, one nationalist and the other Communist. Both these ideologies are totalitarian. In this situation, Radicals will continue to follow an open policy; they will be prepared to join hands with all those who stand for independent and democratically functioning trade union movement. At the same time, they will intensify their efforts to educate the workers in the spirit of freedom and self-reliance, for only then can the workers unite in appropriate political and trade union organisations and carve out a future worthy of free men.

BROAD-BASED TRADE UNIONISM

POLITICAL TRENDS IN INDIAN LABOUR
MOVEMENT

PROF: N. G. RANGA

Indian Peasants' Institute, Nidubrolu

Prof. N. G. Ranga's asseveration is that a revitalised Congress is the only political party in India that has in it to assist the toiling masses of this country— industrial workers, agricultural labour, artisans, and intellectual and professional workers brought within the ambit of the Indian National Trade Union Congress—in the attainment of their political power and economic and social freedom. The Gandhian ideal of Democratic Kisan Mazdoor Praja Raj is just the thing, a dynamics of a new movement, a banner under which a broad-based Trade Unionism should be built up. This is the sanction and

inspirational provocation for the launching of the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

The exclusive emphasis on industrial labour as being the "proletariat" of a country, "the Marxist-Leninist ideology of a Solo-flight", has proved to be ineffective in Europe. Industrial labour is an infinitesimal part of the real proletariat and even that part is not completely organised. The I.N.T.U.C has a job cut out for it in organising the unorganised and in organising a well-integrated Labour Front of all sectors of the working-classes. The economic objective of these organised masses should be socialisation of industry which promotes generally self-governing co-operative units of production, assembling and distribution and large-scale organisation of industries such as transport, mining, electricity etc., and not mere State Capitalism. Other ideologies and other techniques have been given a chance but have led us nowhere. The Gandhian approach affords a common platform; the Gandhian ideal will free the masses from shackles of every description.

VARIOUS IDEOLOGIES are making their impact, today, on Indian Labour. It is difficult as yet to say which of them has gained, or is likely to gain and, how soon, a predominant hold over our labour. Indian Industrial labour has certainly a very important role to play in our political and economic life. But whether it can come to be the dominant factor, as is hoped by the Communists and Fourth Internationalists is doubtful.

What is the labour force of a country

There is the orthodox Communist view that the proletariat is the mass of industrial workers. But there is also the Gandhian view that not only the industrial workers, but also artisans and agricultural, intellectual and professional workers should form part of the labour force of any country. Soviet Russia has been obliged to recognise intellectuals and professionals also as forming a section of labour. The Communist Parties of South-Eastern European countries, which are under the domination of Soviet Russia, have also come to accept the more comprehensive and liberal conception of labour and thus consider agricultural workers also as labour classes. Therefore, we will be justified in considering the countless number of agricultural workers, 10 millions of industrial workers and another 20 millions of intellectuals and professionals, as the real proletariat of India.

Warring bids for labour leadership

A number of political parties are today vying with each other for the support of industrial labour. It was the Communist Party which started off with great advantage in 1930 to capture the whole of the Indian industrial proletariat. For more than 10 years, all patriotic forces in India were content to leave the work of organisation of the industrial proletariat of India to them because they were confident that the Communists would mobilise the proletariat as an effective ally of anti-Imperialism. But by 1939 the Congress Socialists and the Royists had begun to challenge their leadership, and to organise different sections of the proletariat on their own lines. It was Mahatma Gandhi, who took the initiative as long ago as 1917, to organise Ahmedabad labour on definitely non-violent and Satyagrahic lines. The late N. G. Ramaswami of Coimbatore had organised successfully Coimbatore labour on Gandhian politico-economic lines,

The Royists too have started their own organisation on the basis of their Radical Democratism, while the Fourth Internationalists have begun to compete with all others with their ideology of permanent revolution.

All these political parties can be sorted out into two main groups: one which draws its inspiration from the proletarian Socialism of the West, and the other from Mahatma Gandhi.

Land-marks of Indian Trade Union History

It will be interesting to keep in mind a few of the land-marks in the history of the Indian Trade Union Movement. It was in the beginning of the first decade of this century, that some attention was paid by Indian nationalists to the deplorable conditions of labour in Bombay mills. A labour Commission was then appointed. It favoured legislation for limitation of working hours and protection particularly to children, and women. The end of the last war, and the founding of the I. L. O. and the war-inspired boom, and the subsequent depression forced the pace of labour organisation and labour legislation. The triumph of the Russian Revolution, the advent of the British Labour Government (1924), the nomination of Mr. N. M. Joshi to the Central Legislative Assembly, and the foundation of the Indian Trade Union Congress which brought together the Railway Men's Federation led by Mr. V. V. Giri and the Textile Labour Union led by Messrs. Joshi and Shiva Rao contributed to the growth of a proletarian political atmosphere in the Indian Labour World.

Broken Ranks of Trade Unionism

Indian Nationalists expected organised labour in the three great key services of Railways, Textiles and Jute, to lend a helping hand in their struggle against Imperialism. So the press and national politicians gave tremendous encouragement to the few Trade Unions and backed their strikes. By 1927 some Communists had begun to wedge themselves into the growing labour movement and by 1929, they had grown powerful enough to be able to cause a split in the movement. The British Government was forced to appoint a Royal Commission on Labour what with growing unrest and strikes in Bombay, Cawnpore and Calcutta, inspired by the Communists and others. Things came to a head in 1929, when the Trade Union Congress had to decide whether it should co-operate with the Whitley Commission or not. Those

were the days of intense nationalist fervour. The Communists fought for the boycott of the Whitley Commission and gained a tactical majority in the Trade Union Congress, and Joshi, Giri and Shiva Rao and their supporters left the Congress and formed the National Labour Federation and continued to co-operate with the Whitley Commission. The Communists, on the other hand, persisted in their sectarianism to such an extent, that they split in twain, and with the Red Trade Union Congress as opposed to the usual Trade Union Congress. The British Government took advantage of the Bombay general strike organised by the Communists in 1929 and passed the Trade Disputes Acts in Bombay, and Delhi, instituted the Meerut conspiracy case against Communists and thus bought peace on the labour front for a short time. But by 1937, the Nationalist and Communist forces had grown very strong and had begun to help each other under the Comintern slogan of "Popular Front". Therefore, the rival organisations, except the unions of Ahmedabad, Tatanagar and Coimbatore, which were being run on the principles of Mahatma Gandhi, came together again under the banner of the Trade Union Congress.

**The advent of
the Hindustan
Mazdoor
Sevak Sangh**

It was not until 1938 that Gandhian Trade Union leaders realised the need for a national organisation to develop Trade Unionism on the lines popularised by Mahatma Gandhi when they formed the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh (HMSS) with a view to train workers and their leaders in different parts of the country. But the HMSS had to mark time until Congressmen came to be disillusioned about the Communists and the Trade Unions controlled by them during 1942 revolution, before there came to be enough Congressmen interested in Labour and willing to work under the aegis of the HMSS and to organise labour on the lines propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. It was only then that a large number of Congressmen began to understand the full significance of the sudden outbreak of Communist-inspired strikes in 1937-39 when Congress Ministries were functioning. They could then see that the Communist Party could never be a friend of any other party, least of all the National Congress, which happened to be the most dominating factor in Indian politics, because the Communist Party had always aimed in every country, to disrupt other

political parties in order that it may attain the most prominent position. Therefore it was during this period of disillusionment, that Congressmen came to feel the necessity for the HMSS and began to rally round its banner. By 1945 Mahatma Gandhi also came to realise the urgency of the problem of organising labour as well as Kisans in their own organisations. He sent his message to the masses through me that the Congress stood for democratic "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj" and thus cleared the mist of doubts and misunderstandings created by respective propaganda of the Communists and others that Mahatma Gandhi had never stood for the toiling masses and would never champion their cause just as enthusiastically as the Marxists. Thus the HMSS came to be a powerful nation-wide organisation with the inspiring ideal of democratic "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj."

Why separate organisation became inevitable

The activities of the Communists during this second period of Congress Ministries, since 1946, in fomenting and organising a large number of strikes in all parts of the country, taking advantage of the post-war unsettled conditions and sufferings of the people regarding food and cloth, have opened the eyes of the Indian National Congress to the inevitability and the extreme urgency of organising patriotic labour on the lines of the HMSS into a separate All-India Trade Union Organisation, with a view to protect labour from Communist machinations, to organise them on national lines, to safeguard their interests against employers, to further strengthen their hold over the National Congress, and make the Congress itself the champion of their cause and their effective political platform. Hence the formation of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in May '47 under the presidency of Dr. Suresh Benarjee.

There are three of them now

There are thus three All-India Trade Union Organisations: (1) The All-India National Trade Union Congress; (2) The All-India Trade Union Congress; and (3) The Indian Federation of Labour of the Royists.

Both Royists and Communists aim at achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat. They only differ from each other over the political leadership under which that dictatorship is to be achieved. But the National Congress does not believe in dictatorship, nor does it believe in the possibility and

**Congress has
an Unshak-
able hold on
labour**

admissibility of achieving such a dictatorship for the proletariat alone. The Socialist Party within the Congress has not yet made up its mind whether or not to aim at dictatorship and to accept the whole of century-old Marxist-Leninism, which provides the ideological background and dogma for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Hence its failure so far to line up with the All India National Trade Union Congress.

How far have these rival political parties succeeded in gaining the confidence of the workers? For a long time, the public were under the impression that Communists alone could claim the mass support of industrial workers. But the 1946 January election has exploded that myth. But once Congressmen emerged from Jail in '45 and began to evince energetic interest in Trade Union matters, as for instance in Malabar, Andhra and even in Bombay, Communists came to be dislodged from many of the unions. In certain Unions, Congress-minded workers have broken away and formed their own organisation.

The Royists had won the leadership of a few Trade Unions. During the war, they took advantage of the special financial and other assistance given by Government and also of the absence of Congressmen and gained a foot-hold in quite a large number of Unions. But nowadays their influence is fast waning and Congress Trade Unionists are defeating them on all fronts. The Congress Socialists used to be encouraged before the war by the Congress Committees of Bombay to form and manage a number of Trade Unions and also to capture some Trade Unions from the Communists. But the moment, they pitted themselves against Congressmen as in the elections of O.T. Railway Men's Union, even their biggest leader could not be elected. In Coimbatore and Tatanagar, late N. G. Ramaswami and late Professor Abdul Bari were able to keep Communists at bay and today, their followers are able effectively to defeat the Communists and retain the loyalty of the great majority of workers. Thus it is clear that inspite of the deplorable negligence by Congress of its responsibilities towards Indian Trade Unionism, Indian industrial labour has remained extraordinarily loyal to the nationalist ideals of the Congress and has refused to be turned against Congress leadership.

Indian industrial labour is highly nationalistic and patriotic. It is Congress-minded. It is generally non-violent. It

has not emancipated itself completely from its rural moorings or from its democratic nationalism. It does not take kindly to dictatorship. Though it may allow all other political parties to serve it, it reposes its faith in the Indian National Congress and its leadership.

Organisational efforts of the Congress

So far only a tiny fraction of the total Indian labour force has come to be organised into Trade Unions. The Indian National Trade Union Congress is now out to organise labour in the unorganised industries and provide them all the benefits of Trade Unionism. It is also keen on organising the large mass of labour employed in cottage industries, municipalities, port trusts and seasonal factories. If only a sufficiently large number of Congressmen were to take to this work, it will be possible to bring within the purview of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, 4 to 5 millions of active workers as compared to not more than 1 million of Trade Unionists who are embraced by all other parties making a bid for leadership. But Congressmen have so far not gained sufficient recruits to serve Trade Unions from working class families. Such is also the case with other parties. Hence the dependence of Trade Unionism upon the petty bourgeois leadership and its consequent slow progress. The HMSS seeks to remedy this weakness by taking up intelligent and far-sighted workers themselves and training them in the principles and methods of Trade Unionism and helping them to become the natural leaders of the workers.

Some of us have been making successful efforts to organise the artisans. So far, the All India Weavers' Congress has developed Trade Unions among the 10 million weavers and they have today a membership of half a million. The other artisans too are being organised. It is the paucity of organisers hailing from among artisans themselves which is retarding the rapid growth of Trade Unions among these artisans. So we have started schools for training organisers. But wherever we find such organisers, our organisational work is making rapid strides because the artisan classes are so highly organisable, thanks to their occupational and caste traditions. Let us remember that our artisan classes are the age-long proletariat of India. They do possess the real proletarian traditions.

**Political
potentialities
of Indian
labour**

But the grave weakness of the Indian working classes including the industrial proletariat has been, as in most other countries, their ignorance of their right and capacity for the attainment of effective political power. But unlike, as in many other countries, the moment our workers are helped to realise the need and possibility for the attainment of political power, they are capable of making rapid strides in their political progress.

It is because of this political potentialities of Indian labour and their democratic caste and village panchayats that Communists, Royists, Socialists and recently the Fourth Internationalists have been able, with so much success, to way-lay such a large number of Trade Unionists and mislead them into the wrong impression that the Congress has stood only for the rich and the lauded and that the concept of trusteeship would perpetuate the regime of the modern tribe of employers. For a time this anti-Congress propaganda did sway the minds of the industrial proletariat of a few towns like Bombay, Cawnpore, Calcutta and Madras. But the unequivocal declaration of Mahatma Gandhi that Congress stands for democratic "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj" has opened their eyes to the really democratic Socialistic ideals of the Congress and is fast reconciling them to Congress leadership.

The triumph of Soviet Russia over Nazism and its pre-war and post-war achievements in reconstruction and rehabilitation and the successful and vibrant peasant and proletarian leadership thrown up by its masses have no doubt brought new hope and enthusiasm to the masses of Indian working classes. The triumph of British labour over the Conservative Party has also fired their ambitions to achieve political power in India. There is indeed an inspiring stir in the Indian Political atmosphere, rousing and energising the masses and firing their ambitions. No wonder it has become quite a natural thing for political workers and organisers of Trade Unions and the Kisan Congress, to exhort the toiling masses to fight for and attain complete political power.

**Issues Facing
Indian Labour**

But will it be possible for them to attain complete political power for themselves and by themselves? Can they hope to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat promised by the Communists and Socialists? Do they really passionately

desire such a dictatorship? Are they so completely divorced from, and opposed to the vast masses of peasantry, who out-number them as to dare to ignore their legitimate political ambitions and rights and to pursue the Leninist-Stalinist tactics of splitting the peasant ranks discrediting and destroying the natural leadership as is provided by National Congress in India and to establish their own dictatorship under the aegis of Communist Party or the Fourth Internationalists or the Socialists? These are some of the political issues that are today confronting our Indian industrial labour.

**Foreign
Experience
projects an
Object-lesson**

A glimpse at the political experience of the South-Western European countries during the inter-war period will be of some use in answering the above questions. Both the Communists and Socialists of Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary and even Poland tried to attain political power both severally and jointly without the co-operation of peasants and sometimes in opposition to peasants. They did form Ministries and exercise political power. But they could not remain long in power because they could not win and ensure the support of the peasants who form the great majority of the masses. The peasants, on the other hand, met with a similar misfortune and revealing political experience. The result was, reaction and counter revolution ruled in those countries most of the time.

Why did this happen? Because of the failure of the Socialists and Communists, most of whom belonged to bourgeois class and who had imbibed the Marxist prejudice against peasants and thus prominence to the interests of the urban masses and their proletarian classes. They would not re-orient their Marxism so as to abandon their ideal of dictatorship of the proletariat and develop a political ideal that could embrace both the proletariat and the peasants ensuring for them the enthusiastic support of the great masses of the rural areas. The peasant parties were so much prejudiced against the Socialists and the Communists that they failed to realise their oneness of interest with the proletariat and intellectuals and professionals of towns, and develop a united front with the urban masses if need be, apart from, and independently of Socialists and Communists.

In the present post-war period the local Communists seem to have learnt much from the Russian experience during

1936 to 42, when in Soviet Russia the need was felt for recognising the peasants, intellectuals and professionals as semi-independent classes deserving of special consideration in politics and legislatures. Therefore they have developed in all the countries which have been liberated by the Russian arms and have therefore come under the domineering influence of the Communist Party, their National Fronts comprehending not only the proletariat, which is still a small minority, the intellectuals and professionals who are such a dominating section in towns, but also artisans who are nearly as numerous as the proletariat and the broad masses of the peasantry. It is this progressive and comradely combination of all classes of toilers which is today responsible for the rapid liquidation of landlordism, the control of the vagaries of money-lenders, and the installation of the masses in effective political power. The National Government have already nationalised a number of key and basic industries and brought all other industries under the state or co-operative control. This shows how, when the co-operation of peasantry is obtained, the proletariat too can attain and retain political power.

In Britain the Labour party which had for long neglected the agricultural class has come to adopt a progressive and constructive policy of reconciling the interests of both the farmers and agricultural workers and has, therefore, won majority of the seats in Parliament from rural England and is, today, trying its best to achieve parity between industrial and rural labour through various legislative and administrative measures.

Unfortunately the same thing could not be said of Sweden. There the Socialists and peasant parties which had long been co-operating with each other in forming the coalition Governments, have again begun to oppose each other due to the pre-occupation of Socialists with urban interests, with consequent weakness to both the parties.

I have found to my regret that the Socialists of all South-Eastern European Countries are as little peasant-minded as the Communists, and are unable to shed their anti-peasant prejudices and are unwilling to establish co-operative relations with the peasant parties, with the result, that both of them are being weakened by the more effective and dynamic offensive of the Communists. Should not the

Indian proletariat draw its lessons from these European experiences?

Unilateral efforts will not be of any avail

It is wrong and highly unwise for our industrial proletariat to think of attaining complete political power by unilateral efforts as is supposed to have become possible in Soviet Russia. Even in Russia, if it had not been for the revolutionary role played by peasants between 1905-17 neither the March nor the November Revolutions would have been possible. To attempt to by-pass all political parties that cater to peasants and even sabotage those parties as was done in Soviet Russia when the Socialist revolutionaries were out-manouevred by Bolsheviks, will also be unwise because, in India, the peasants are wide-awake. As things are, the Indian peasants are much better knit together both socially and economically and can be as effectively mobilised for political action as the industrial proletariat. Moreover, the political and Kisan Satyagraha campaigns organised during the past 30 years under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi have trained our peasants in the science of political and economic non-violent warfare.

Our artisans too are even better knit and are fast becoming conscious of their political needs and rights and cannot be expected to leave their political leadership to be monopolised by the minority of the industrial proletariat. Therefore, it will be impossible, if not highly disastrous, for the industrial proletariat to think of attaining their own proletarian dictatorship after the Marxist-Leninist ideology by a solo-flight into political adventurism.

In one sense both the Communists and Socialists seem to have realised this. Hence their present-day anxiety to develop their contacts with peasants through their rival Kisan Organisations as contrasted with their pre-1936 indifference and at times opposition to the peasant movement and the Kisan Congress. Unfortunately they have not been attempting to co-operate with us in building up a united patriotic political as well as economic front for our peasant masses by strengthening the Kisan Congress on the economic front and by converting the National Congress into a real political party of all the toiling masses. On the other hand, they have been trying to split up and confuse our peasantry in the hope of leaving them bereft of any unified

and easily identifiable leadership by maintaining their own rival class organisations and by refusing to accept the political leadership of the Indian National Congress, which is seeking to perform the same function in India towards the masses as the National Fronts of the South-Eastern European Countries. Hence the impossibility for these political parties to win and assure the Indian industrial proletariat of the whole-hearted support of Indian peasantry and artisans.

And which revolutionary in India can hope to organise and achieve a social revolution without the co-operation and active comradeship of the highly politically conscious class of intellectuals and professionals? Unlike the intellectuals and professionals of other countries, these have been knit together in India by their socio-religious contacts and consciousness and their traditions of intellectual toil and sense of power and superiority. They too want political power. They are ready to oppose all functionless and exploiting vested interests. They have shown themselves highly revolutionary by their participation in Congress and Moslem League struggles and movements. They indeed, provide the main bulk of leadership of Congress and Communist parties. How can our proletariat hope to attain political power, all for themselves and retain it under their own leadership in the face of such formidable claimants?

**One properly
strung politi-
cal party**

It is for all these reasons we, of the Indian National Congress, who spring from the toiling masses and who have gained experience in organising and educating the peasants and workers during the last 25 years, have come to the conclusion that what is most just and ideal is also the most practical, that is, to bring together all the four classes of the toiling masses, peasants, factory workers, artisans, professionals and intellectuals, organise them into one political party like the Indian National Congress, inspire them to fight for attainment of democratic "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj" and lead them in a co-operative struggle for freedom and power for democracy and peace.

When we presented this ideal to the National Congress in 1942, it accepted it whole-heartedly, inspired as it was by the dynamics of its impending all-out struggle against British imperialism. In 1945, Mahatma Gandhi put his seal of

approval upon this ideal and approach. And when it was put out authoritatively by the Hindustan Mazdoor Sevak Sangh, as its ideal for the Indian proletariat, the industrial workers acclaimed it as their own, almost by intuitive perception. No wonder that when the Communists competed with the Congress candidates in the very wards of the Bombay proletariat, the working classes with out hesitation returned Congress candidates to the Corporation. Therefore, one is encouraged to feel that in India the industrial proletariat is likely to accept this ideal of democratic 'Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj' as their own and welcome and support every effort made by their national and class leadership to win the co-operation of peasants and the other classes and to join and strengthen the political party which can be trusted to work for the attainment of the ideal and thus win for them and other toilers effective political power and social and economic freedom.

Which political party other than the Indian National Congress can it be? Hence the confidence with which the Congress has started the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

Excepting the Communists and Royists and others of their like, all other political parties have today reconciled themselves to the necessity of combining the peasants with workers in order to attain political power. For instance, the Socialist Party stands for the peasants' and workers' Raj; the Forward Bloc for peasants' and workers' Panchayat Raj. Therefore it is well for the industrial proletariat to reconcile itself to the idea of winning political freedom and social and economic equality, not for themselves and by themselves, but in co-operation with all other toilers and for all.

**Democracy
and not
Dictatorship**

But sometimes, workers may despair of the capacity of democracy to yield to them the much-needed economic equality and self-government. Democracy has certainly failed so far in America and a number of European Countries to yield to workers economic equality and lead them to social and economic self-government. But there are outstanding instances of success of democracy. In England, labour has achieved an effective majority in Parliament and formed full-fledged Labour Ministry and is now carrying out a socialist programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction. In Sweden, Denmark, France, Holland, Australia and New Zealand,

workers have attained both political and economic power. In all these countries, they have not had to resort to dictatorship to reach this status. They could have attained their present stature in these countries even at a much earlier date and achieved full economic self-government, if only they had worked for and obtained the co-operation of the agricultural and professional masses. In fact, it was as a result of their 12 years' coalition with peasants that the Swedish Socialist Party was able to develop the most comprehensive social services and socialistic organisation of their economic life.

Therefore, it is wrong for any section of workers to assume that Democracy is incapable of leading them to economic and social equality and self-government. That dictatorship is not *inevitable* is the lesson learnt by world proletariat.

**Violence
breeds
violence**

Need there be a violent revolution to win political and economic freedom? That it is not an inevitable necessity is the lesson of India's triumph over British Imperialism and British Labour's success over Conservatism. History has taught that violence is not the right weapon and that it breeds further violence.

Therefore, neither dictatorship nor violence need be the means for the attainment of political and economic freedom by the toiling masses.

Some pose the question whether direct action is not much better than parliamentarianism. But this question is the result of a misreading of the actual dynamics of the proletarian life and struggle for protection and power. These two means are not opposed to each other. They can supplement each other. Parliamentarianism can yield very effective results and strengthen any direct struggle like a strike that workers may resort to. If misused, it may weaken such struggles. But it need not necessarily do so. Parliamentarianism will indeed be a poor weapon if it cannot be strengthened by a resort to direct struggle when that extreme need arises.

**Methods
inspired by
purposes**

Everything depends upon the purpose for which the two methods are to be used. If they are to be utilised only for the sake of attaining temporary relief from a passing difficulty of workers, then a strike may at times be a more

effective weapon; so can parliamentarianism be at other times. But both these weapons and their temporary results—good or bad—can help workers in laying the stepping-stones towards their ultimate achievement of political and economic power and the continuous and growing freedom from social disabilities.

Communists and others are sometimes accused of launching strikes for their own sake, because they believe that strikes, whether successful or not, produce splendid revolutionary and educational effects upon labour and thus pave the way towards class-consciousness and raise labour's political tempo and capacity. Radicals and Democrats and even Socialists are equally accused of pinning their faith to parliamentarianism because they are too sanguine about the potentialities of mere persuasive propaganda. Both these accusations may be true under the circumstances in which specific strikes or parliamentary methods are being resorted to. But on the whole every strike has its revolutionary effects, just as every parliamentary triumph of workers produces its educational and inspiring effects upon the rank and file of labour. Neither a strike nor a parliamentary struggle is an end in itself. The real end of the proletariat is the attainment of power and happiness. These can only be the means.

Some maintain that workers should not be troubled with politics, that Trade Unionism should not be over-burdened with political differences and Trade Unions should be organised entirely on economic basis. These notions are based upon a wrong conception of the real role of Trade Unionism. Trade Unionism is not intended merely to yield higher wages, smaller hours of labour, better conditions of work and social security. It is only one of the great social and economic weapons that industrial labour has to emancipate itself from its present dependence upon Capitalism and to win for it, in co-operation with the other sections of toilers, complete political and economic power in modern society. Trade Unionism therefore, is as much a political instrument as an economic one.

Strike should be resorted to when the conciliation and arbitration have failed to yield satisfactory relief to workers. Even after having gone on strike workers must be ready to negotiate with the employers with or without the mediation

of the State in order to gain partial or full satisfaction of their demands.

Stay-in strikes and lightning strikes also serve the same purpose.

That these strikes can be organised and run on non-violent lines has been demonstrated successfully by Mahatma Gandhi and his disciples in India. In America, for instance, strikes generally lead to violence and when there is violence, very often, the employer gets the better of the workers.

The general strike weapon

French Trade Unionism has accepted the syndicalist conception of the general strike. Many a time French workers have resorted to it but with partial success. The November Russian Revolution was in part the result of the threat of such a general strike. The 1926 English general strike ended in smoke but it eventually led to the formation of the Labour Ministry in 1929. In India, too, the Communists have wielded this weapon but, too often with insignificant results. Mahatma Gandhi has believed in the use of it for political purposes also and when he called upon the workers to hurl this weapon in 1942, it was only the workers of Ahmedabad, Jamshedpur, Cawnpore, Bangalore and Coimbatore who gave a worthy response. Recently, the late Aung San's Government in Burma came into office on the crest of a general strike. Therefore it is a powerful weapon which has to be used very sparingly for definite purposes.

What is meant by Socialisation of Industry

Should the workers prefer to work for controlled Capitalism or State Capitalism? Controlled Capitalism was attained by Nazism in Germany and New Dealism in America. Experience has shown that it can yield higher wages and better conditions for labour. But workers cannot be content with it because they have no control over industry. The profit motive can still be its dominating feature and their exploitation can only be limited but not eliminated. State Capitalism is just a little better. It certainly eliminates private enterprise and its profits. It can improve the lot of workers. But it only substitutes the new tribe of managers and their professionals for the old brood of employers, although it is true that the managers would be more directly responsible to the State than employers under controlled Capitalism. They nevertheless can manage to

boss over workers in an uncreative manner. Hence the opposition of Mahatma Gandhi and thinkers such as Prof. G. D. H. Cole to both these systems.

Mahatma Gandhi, Aldous Huxley and Cole prefer co-operative organisation of industry, through a very large number of self-governing co-operative units of production, assembling and distribution. The professionals who needs must be employed in these co-operatives can be more easily controlled and befriended. Therefore Indian workers will do well to aim at the co-operative reorganisation and development of our industrial society. That is what we mean by socialisation of Industry.

At the same time some industries like transport, mining and the great engineering, hydraulic and electrical works have to be carried on, on large scale and their management entrusted to a highly integrated class of professionals. There are two ways--both complementary--by which the proletariat can and ought to develop comradely relations with the professionals and intellectuals through their common espousal of the ideal of Democratic "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj" and thus ensure sympathetic co-operation between them. Secondly, through the organisation of Works Councils and their combined representation in all the management boards effective co-operation and co-ordination, mutual dependence and respect between these two great sections of industrial toilers, that is, proletariat and professionals, can be attained. Thus State and Guild Socialism, decentralisation of industry on a co-operative basis have to be resorted to, according to needs. This offers a solution to the growing problem of Soviet Russia. The friction and conflict of interest and leadership between the professionals and proletariat can only be solved through the popularisation of the ideal of Democratic "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj".

**Trade
Unionism
cannot be
divorced from
politics**

Trade Unionism can never be an economic movement divorced from politics nor can labour politics be divorced from economic issues. They are inter-dependent. Therefore, proletarian economism is as disastrous and futile as pure politics. Both have to act and react upon the social conditions of the proletariat.

That Trade Unionism and labour politics cannot be self-contained and be independent of peasants, artisans and

professionals is becoming more and more evident. For instance in over-populated countries like India and China, strikes cannot be so successful unless the peasants are also organised and refuse to "blackleg" the proletariat, for there is too much unemployment and too great a demand for work and employment. Also unless professionals and intellectuals sympathise and join hands with the proletariat when they are on strike, especially if it is a general strike, workers are likely to meet with failure. It is in the interests of workers themselves to win the confidence and support of the peasants, artisans and professionals through their enthusiastic acceptance of Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of Democratic "Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj" by taking their stand on democracy, non-violence and co-operation. Such are some of the modern political trends influencing labour organisations and their leaders who are building up their contacts with ever-increasing cadres of Indian labour.

THE INDIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

V. B. KARNIK

General Secretary, Indian Federation of Labour

Shri Karnik deprecates the tendency to use the Trade Union Movement as the Labour Front of upper-class Nationalism in power and makes a plea for the development of a distinctive politics of the common man within a real democratic frame-work.

Observing the Trade Union scene, he feels that the attempts to win the worker over to doctrinaire 'isms' that do not take the context of his position into account are actually sidetracking the real issue. The worker and his life ought to be the starting-point and not a particular philosophy. You must create a philosophy for the worker and not use him as a shield in a battle to force a pre-concieved creed down the throat of the country.

THE Indian Trade Union Movement is not very old. It has, however, a very chequered history and a rather stormy career. It began as a movement during the days of the first world war. Earlier, a couple of trade unions had grown up, but they do not have much significance. It was the conditions created by the World War I that persuaded workers to form unions for demanding redress of their grievances.

Unions grew up in the beginning amongst post-men, railway workers and textile workers. Few of the unions formed in those early years of 1915-16 are now in existence. Many of them died out after a short, stormy but useful, career. And yet powerful movements of workers were led in cities like Bombay, Madras, Lahore etc., for higher wages, shorter hours and better conditions of life and work.

**A.I.T.U.C.
gives it a
fillip**

With the organisation of the All-India Trade Union Congress in October 1920, the trade union movement acquired a more stable and co-ordinated form. Many factors contributed to the birth of the A.I.T.U.C. The most important, however, was the need for having a central organisation to represent Indian Workers in International Labour Conferences and Committees which became a regular feature of the post-war world. Born in 1920, the A.I.T.U.C. still continues to play an important part in the trade union movement of the country.

In this first period the trade union movement was conducted predominantly by persons actuated by humanitarian considerations. The miserable conditions of the workers and their helplessness persuaded some social and political workers to take interest in them and to work for their relief. Some of the political workers like Lajpat Rai, C. R. Das etc., were very prominently associated with the labour movement. But it was more humanitarian consideration than any political motive that attracted them to the trade union movement. N. M. Joshi and his colleagues fall in a different category. They were not strictly humanitarians. They had a sense of workers' rights and of the demands of social justice. They were, however, more keen than others on keeping the T.U. movement aloof from politics. In effect, therefore, their work was not far different from that of the

humanitarians. This period can be said to have continued as far as 1926.

Communists come in

It was in 1926 that Communists started working in T. U. Movement. With their entry, a new spirit penetrated into the movement. Communists are essentially political workers. It is for helping their political movement that they build up trade unions. Communists introduced politics into the movement and since then the T.U. movement has become an arena for the struggle of a number of conflicting political tendencies. This would have happened even if Communists had not entered the field. As soon as it grew a bit old the T.U. movement would have in the ordinary course developed a political outlook. Besides, realising its potentialities, political groups would have invaded it and sought to utilise it for their own ends.

During the years 1926 to 1929 Communists were very active in the T.U. Movement. They built up a number of powerful mass unions. By their militancy and activity they secured large following amongst Industrial workers in a number of cities and Industries and also attracted to themselves a number of trade union workers. Thus they became a powerful factor in the A.I.T.U.C. which was till then entirely under the leadership of older moderate leaders.

Warring Ideologies

The points of difference between Communists and older leaders were many and varied. There was the difference in the political outlook. The latter wanted the trade unions to be aloof from politics. The economic struggle, they contended, could be fought without introducing politics and without allying with any political party. The Communist view was entirely different. It regarded the economic struggle as an integral part of the political and looked upon trade union struggles for better wages, shorter hours and other concessions as dress rehearsals of the political struggle for the capture of power. They were very keen, therefore, on the T.U. movement having an advanced political outlook. Opinions differed also with regard to the day to day functioning of unions. Moderate leaders laid more emphasis on representations and negotiations and regarded strike as the last weapon. Communists were not so particular about the former and pinned their faith on the militant struggles of workers. The differences extended to the international field

as well. Moderate leaders were for the affiliation of the Indian T.U. movement with the International Federation of Trade Unions, a body dominated by Social Democratic Trade unionists of Europe. Communists who drew their inspiration from Soviet Russia were opposed to this affiliation. Further, they were opposed to participation in International Labour Conferences organised by the International Labour Organisation. The moderate leaders were keen on such participation as it would, they contended, secure for Indian workers the benefits of international labour standards. The moderates were, therefore, stigmatised as reformists and bitter struggles took place in a number of cities for winning or retaining the allegiance of workers and control of unions. Generally, communists came out on top, in those struggles. Their militancy was more attractive to workers and, besides, reformist tactics did not yield them any results.

World War I and after

The first ten years after the termination of the first world war were favourable to the growth of trade unions. In the first place, there was a good deal of awakening amongst workers and there was a realisation of the strength that organisation brings. There was, besides, a rapid industrial growth arising out of the new economic policy of British Imperialism. Some old established industries made good progress. Some new industries were also developed. This created a larger demand for workers. That enabled them to resist rationalisation in a number of places and also to secure some wage increases. It was during this period that the working day was reduced from 12 to 11 and then to 10. A certain number of I.L.O. Conventions were also adopted. That secured some useful concessions to workers. In 1926 the Trade Unions Act was passed. That gave a legal status to workers' organisations. All this helped Communists in securing a large following amongst workers.

Flushed with their organisational success and large following, Communists forced a split in the A.I.T.U.C. at its Nagpur session held in December 1929. The moderates were tired of the Communist company and wanted to get out. By their ultra-left and irresponsible behaviour communists made their way easy. The actual split took place on two issues of hardly any relevance to the T.U. movement. One was the boycott of the Whitley Commission (the

Royal Commission appointed to inquire into conditions of Indian labour) and the other was the A.I.T.U.C.'s affiliation to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, a camouflaged Communist organisation. Resolutions on both the points were passed by a very narrow majority on the insistence of Communists. As soon as the resolutions were passed moderate leaders walked out of the A.I.T.U.C. and declared their resolve to form a new rival organisation. They were able to take away with them all their unions forming a substantial part of the membership of the organisation.

The Split

This split was entirely due to the ultra-left and irresponsible policies of the Communists. They would not have, however, succeeded in carrying through their policies if they had not secured the support of left-wing nationalists. The latter did not know much of the T.U. movement and allowed themselves to be carried away by the leftist talk of the Communists. It is significant to note that Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the session at which the split took place. He did not, however, do any thing either to avert the split or to give a correct leadership to the Communists. The A.I.T.U.C. was soon reduced to the position of a paper organisation. The effect of the world depression of 1929 began to be felt in India from 1930 onwards. Indian industries began to decline. A large number of workers was thrown out of employment. Cuts were effected in workers' wages and allowances. All this had a disastrous effect on the T.U. movement. A number of unions broke down. Simultaneously, the Government launched an attack on the T.U. movement. The Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case was the biggest blow. It deprived the T.U. movement of a number of experienced trade union leaders. The younger men who took their place were mere fanatics lacking experience as well as knowledge of the movement. By their rash and suicidal policies they destroyed whatever little had remained of the T.U. movement. They captured the A.I.T.U.C., but in their hands it became nothing better than a paper organisation.

The Roy Group make debut

The A.I.T.U.C. and the T.U. movement were rescued from this miserable position by the Roy Group as it was then known. This group started functioning in the T.U. movement towards the end of 1930. It initiated a movement for

trade union unity on the basis of a "Platform of Unity", embodying the basic principles of the T.U. movement. The document clarified the role of trade unions as well as their relation to the national movement, which was one of the most burning issues of controversy. The members of the Group tried to build up new unions as well as rebuild old shattered unions on the basis of those principles. They were very soon able to rally round the Platform of Unity a good number of genuine trade unionists belonging to various schools of political thought. They with their allies, soon became a force to be contended with in the A.I.T.U.C. as well as the T.U. movement. The Communists fought them bitterly and unscrupulously. The issue was gained by the next session of the T.U.C. held in Calcutta in June 1931. Communists lost the fight. They found themselves in a minority. And instead of accepting the decision of the majority they did what the moderates had done a year and a half earlier. They broke away from the A.I.T.U.C. and formed a new organisation, called the Red Trade Union. Neither the Red Congress of the Communists nor the National Federation of Trade Unions of the moderates was able to make any headway in the country. The former had a very short and inglorious career. The Communist attempt to build up red unions in opposition to older established unions did not bear fruit. After about 3 years' wandering in the wilderness, the Communists came back to the A.I.T.U.C. after liquidating their Red Trade Union Congress. The Royists played a prominent part in securing this reunion. They played an equally important part in bringing about an amalgamation between the A.I.T.U.C. and the N.F.T.U. which took place 4 years later in 1938. The N.F.T.U. was organised sometime in 1931. It had the backing of some powerful unions. But the unions were more concerned with their own individual affairs than with developing a co-ordinated country-wide movement. As a result the N.F.T.U. as such was never able to exercise any influence on the economic or political developments in the country. It had no separate and distinct policy of its own. It was more or less a factional affair. As soon as the amalgamation took place it merged in the A.I.T.U.C. without leaving any trace of its existence.

**Trade Unions
make
headway**

By this time the T. U. movement had recovered itself from the effects of the world depression. The trade and industry of the country had started working up. Avenues of employment had increased. There was a better demand for labour. That enabled workers to secure some wage increases. The legislative position also improved. The Factories Act was re-enacted with a number of improvements. A little later, hours of work were reduced to 9 hours per day. Railway and other transport workers also secured a shorter working week. Some other I. L. O. Conventions were also ratified. The Payment of Wages Act was passed guaranteeing for the first time payment of wages a few days after each wage period. These developments had a heartening effect on the T. U. movement. A number of new unions was formed and older unions grew in numbers as well as influence. Politically also the position of the trade unions improved as a result of about 38 seats reserved for labour in the provincial Legislative Assemblies under the new constitution of 1935. Some of these were trade union seats. That increased the importance of trade unions.

**Undertones of
differences**

The T. U. movement was at this time a united whole. In all-India politics as well as other matters, it was speaking with one voice and through one organisation. But inside that organisation were working a number of groups with differing social and political ideas and ideals. They had hardly anything in common except a vague nationalist outlook. The moderate leaders had by now come to accept it and were not opposed to the T. U. movement generally allying itself with the nationalist movement. Since 1931 there was this close alliance between the A. I. T. U. C. and the Indian National Congress. The alliance grew stronger with the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party. The members of the Party came to the T. U. movement at the A. I. T. U. C. with their strong Congress sympathies and militant nationalist outlook. Their purpose was to develop the A. I. T. U. C. as an auxiliary organisation of the Indian National Congress. As long as the Congress was in opposition and functioning more or less as a board-based national movement they did not meet with any opposition. But the situation changed when in 1937 the Congress accepted office in a number of provinces. The Congress became then the administrator of the *status quo* and its social character, which

was changing slowly over a period of years, underwent a rapid change and the Congress became a party of the upper classes instead of a people's organisation as it professed to be. This introduced a number of complications in the relations between the various political groups working in the A. I. T. U. C. Therein lay the seeds of disunity and the causes of the two splits which took place in the A. I. T. U. C. - one in the year 1941 and the other in the year 1947.

They split again

The split of 1941 took place on the issue of India's attitude towards the anti-Fascist war. A big group of trade-unionists, led by members of the Radical Democratic Party, was of the opinion that in pursuance of the fundamental principles of the T. U. movement the A. I. T. U. C. should support and participate in the anti-Fascist war irrespective of the acts of omission and commission of the British Government. An equally large number of trade-unionists was opposed to that view. The latter group favoured resistance to war effort on the ground that it was an imperialist war of Great Britain with which India had no concern. That was also the view of the entire nationalist movement. As a matter of fact it was the off-spring of the nationalist outlook. The trade unionists had not abandoned that outlook even after joining the movement as an auxiliary of the nationalist movement. Under their influence the A.I.T.U.C. refused to support the war. This left the Radicals and other genuine trade unionists no alternative but to get out of the A. I. T. U. C. and start a new organisation.

Indian Federation of Labour

The Indian Federation of Labour was formed in November 1941. It immediately grew as a big organisation. A large number of unions broke away from the T.U.C. to join it and a good number of unions which had kept themselves aloof from any central organisation also joined it. It became a powerful factor in the industrial as well as the political movement of the country and has remained so ever since.

The organisation of the Indian Federation of Labour brings into prominence one vital issue of the T.U. movement which many trade unionists are still unwilling to face. What is the political outlook of the T.U. movement? Is it possible for the T.U. movement to be without a political outlook? Persons like N. M. Joshi hold the view that trade unions have

nothing to do with politics. That view has been exploded by experience. There are others who frankly advocate the acceptance of a nationalist outlook. Communists and Congress Socialists and Forward Blocists and Congressmen belong to that category. They demand that the T.U. movement should have a nationalist outlook, advocate nationalist politics and generally support the Indian National Congress. The Radicals on the other hand take an entirely different view. They agree that the day to day functioning of trade union is not connected with politics. But they emphasise that independent trade unions can thrive only in the climate of democracy. They, therefore, insist that the T.U. movement must have a democratic outlook—the political outlook of the common man and must be opposed to fascism, external or internal, and to any attempt to regiment the working class. The issue raised is, therefore, of an abiding character and fundamental importance. It is the issue of the independence or subservience of the T.U. movement to the nationalist movement of the upper classes. That is why the I.F.L. continues to exist even after the termination of the war.

Still another split

The same issue, though from another angle, is involved in the latest split resulting in the formation of the Indian National Trade Union Congress. The sponsors of the organisation demand that the T.U. movement must unequivocally adopt the nationalist outlook and support the Indian National Congress. They have walked out of the T.U.C. because it does not do so as enthusiastically and as unreservedly as they desire. It is not, therefore, possible to ignore the issue any longer. The trade unions and the T.U. movement will have to make up their minds about their politics, whether they will go with the nationalist movement of the upper classes or take their place in the people's movement.

The main issue

The issue facing the T.U. movement is of a much more fundamental character. If it decides to go with the nationalist movement it will end as the Labour Front of nationalism in power. Nationalism is now installed in power. An independent T.U. movement will be too much of a nuisance and danger to it. It is, therefore, attempting to secure a servile and dependable movement. That is the only meaning of the

curious spectacle of ministers of State going about to organise a central trade union organisation. It is only by openly avowing the politics of the common man that the Indian T.U. movement can avert that danger. The I.F.L. has shown the way. It is yet to be seen if other sections of the movement will follow that path.

Political Policies and Social outlook

This has been the story mainly of the trade union movement as represented by one of two central organisations. But there are some unions which have all along kept themselves aloof from both the central organisations. In the first place, there are the unions of Government servants such as Postmen. Many of them are strong stable organisations. They are precluded from joining any central organisation by certain rules framed by the Government. As a result they have not been able to contribute to the development of the general movement. There are others, however, like the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad, which have chosen to keep aloof. They did so on the ground of their own distinctive social and political outlook. They are run on Gandhian lines. They make a virtue of the practice of compulsory arbitration and stand by the doctrine of trusteeship. It is significant that those unions have now decided to join the newly-formed National Trade Union Congress. That throws a flood of light on the political policies and social outlook of the new organisation.

The Future

Over 30 years have passed since the movement began to grow in India. The progress achieved cannot be regarded as satisfactory. The basis of the movement is still unstable. There are very few stable mass unions. The membership of unions is still largely an uncertain quantity. It grows immediately before and after a strike. It dwindles in periods of normalcy. The financial resources of unions are very meagre. They have hardly any paid staff and most of the work is done by the voluntary labour of middle class intellectuals attracted towards the movement. Leaders from amongst workers are yet to grow. Except in the case of railway workers' unions and Government servants' unions the leadership of unions still rests in the hands of so-called outsiders. Many causes are responsible for this slow growth of the movement. But the two most prominent are the hostility of the employers and the Government. The hand

of repression has during the last 30 years fallen very heavily on the T. U. movement on several occasions. The damage that it did is incalculable. The employers, private as well as public, have been all along antagonistic to unions. Even the elementary right of recognition is not yet available to trade unions. Membership of unions and representations through them are penalised in one form or another even in this year of grace, 1947. It is not surprising that faced with such difficulties and operating in a country full of poverty and unemployment the Indian T. U. movement has not been able to make a rapid progress. The progress has been slow and unspectacular. But even that small progress has secured for Indian workers some valuable concessions. Standing on the basis of those concessions the T. U. movement can now reach out to larger and larger sections of Indian workers. As they will be drawn into the movement they will shake off their ignorance and backwardness, they will cease to regard poverty and misery as their predestined lot, consciousness of rights and confidence in their own strength will grow amongst them and they will be prepared to fight under the banner of their unions and their political party for their political, economic and social liberation. That is the hope and desire with which a trade union worker addresses himself to the difficult task that lies in front of him.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONGRESS

ITS ROLE IN THE TRADE UNION
MOVEMENT

KHANDUBHAI DESAI

*Member, Legislative Assembly, Member Constituent Assembly, General
Secretary, Indian National Trade Union Congress*

The All-India Trade Union Congress, with its Communist leadership, has failed to deliver the goods. It has been in existence for quarter of a century but the working-class is as unorganised as before, as the primary inspiration of the leaders of A. I. T. U. C., who have "artificially entrenched themselves in a dominant position", has never been the development of a democratically organised Indian Trade Union Movement. Membership and Union figures, "fabricated" as they are, do not tell a true tale; the movement has been pressed into the service of political and party ends and even personal ends; Unions have functioned, when they did, as strike committees; and exploitation of the working classes—doubly exploited—

has gone on uninterrupted. A parting of the ways was inevitable, if economic democracy and assistance to the working-class in the fulfilment of its destiny, in the attainment of status and power by democratic methods had to emerge as the principal aims of the labour movement in India. This is the case of Shri Khandubhai Desai and the 'provocation' for the setting-up of the new organisation -not designed as a 'rival' -the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

The present leadership of the A.I.T.U.C., is in the nature of an 'appendage' to "the foreign policy of a foreign country", not a servant of the Indian working-class; as such, correct leadership is essential, a leadership which is not prepared to sacrifice the interests of the workers to imported doctrinaire enthusiasms but desires to hack a high-way for them to attain their stature as key participants in a new order of things.

IT is significant and rather a pity that, even after nearly a generation of work, the existing Trade Union Congress has not been able to consolidate and strengthen the trade union movement in the country. It is admitted on all sides that the trade union movement in India is weak and even seasoned labour workers in the trade union field have to admit that the trade union movement in the country is still in its infancy. That such a state of affairs exist in the field of labour organization is and should be a matter of challenge and deep concern to all those who are working among labour.

**Leadership
did not take
full advantage
of opportunity
projected by
War**

The Trade Union Movement in this country took some sort of shape during the course of the First World War. The situation that was created by that war with regard to prices and wages gave some impetus to the workers to put up organised fight to obtain a level of wages that would maintain the standard of living unimpaired by the rise in the cost of living. However, it must be admitted that this impetus was of a temporary and ephemeral nature and it did not develop into a sustained force for the building up of and consolidation of genuine and healthy trade unionism in the country as one would have expected. For the first time in the history of the labour movement, the workers had an opportunity to give collective fight to the employers for betterment of their economic conditions. If this opportunity had been utilised by those who were leading the trade union movement to build trade unions on a sound and businesslike basis the trade union movement in the country would not have presented a sorry picture and been as feeble as it is today. No doubt, in some places like Ahmedabad and Jamshedpur and to a certain extent in the railways, serious attempts were made to build up a strong trade union movement on correct and constructive lines. The workers, in these centres, were, being properly led. They were able to understand the spirit of trade unionism and through the machinery of the unions that were built up have been able to hold their own against capitalist exploitation and to improve their social and economic standards. It is noteworthy that the workers of Ahmedabad and Jamshedpur have also become equally politically conscious; when the fight for freedom was launched by the country in 1942, they as citizens, readily shared the

joy and suffering of the fight for freedom. The textile workers in Ahmedabad made unique contribution to this political fight, suffering as they did, a loss of nearly 3 crores of rupees in wages alone. They made this tremendous sacrifice, consciously and because of their developed spirit of patriotism. This unique phenomenon opened the eyes of all those who were associated with them; since then the urge to set up a central organization which would reflect and canalise the desires and aspirations of the working class became perceptible.

**Continued
association
with Communist
Leadership
became
Impossible**

Some Trade Union workers were made painfully conscious of the defects in the organisational set-up of the Trade Union Congress which had failed to deliver goods at the most psychological moment in the history of the nation. The Trade Union Congress had dismally failed to build up a strong trade union movement in the country which by its very nature, could be a force which could not be ignored or treated lightly, by anybody. The conclusion was irresistible that there was something inherently wrong in the technique and methods of the existing Trade Union Congress, dominated by Communist leadership, drawing its inspiration as is well-known, from a foreign country. They also realised that the continued association with the communist leadership in the A. I. T. U. C. was highly undesirable and exceedingly detrimental to the interests of the working-class and the country. It was obvious that the weakness of the trade union movement was entirely due to the disruptive tactics of the communists. It was high time that those interested in building up sound and strong trade unions dissociated themselves from the communists if for nothing else to demonstrate to the world that whatever prestige and status the movement had was because of the efforts of non-communist trade union workers.

Ex-presidents of the A. I. T. U. C., such as Sri Hariharnath Shastry, Sri V. V. Giri, Sri Sureshnath Banarjee and Sri V. R. Kalappa advised others in the trade union movement, in clear and categorical terms, on the strength of their intimate knowledge of the working of the A. I. T. U. C., that it would be futile for honest and sincere friends of labour to attempt to capture its leadership by democratic methods, since they could not vie with the others in the art of fabrication of membership and

figures of unions. Those who have grown grey in the service of labour and have been associated with the Trade Union Congress for the last so many years, realise to their great sorrow, that the fictitious elements in the composition of the T. U. C. membership form a very high proportion of the reported strength. And their efforts to purify the Trade Union Congress having failed they were not prepared to waste any more time and energy in reforming an institution which was inherently weak and unsound. It was also felt by many active Trade Union men that, with the advent of the country's independence, the trade union movement would have to play its destined and legitimate role of influencing the trends towards the elimination of political, economic and social exploitation. This, they thought, was impossible as long as the Communists, who had artificially entrenched themselves in a dominant position in the Trade Union Congress, continued to take their lead and inspiration from a foreign country whose foreign policy was likely to affect, the trade union movement in this country, and to the detriment of the real interests of the country and the working class.

A.I.T.U.C is at best a loose Federation speaking for an incoherent labour movement

It will not be out of place to refer to one of the primary inspirational forces of the founders of the Trade Union Congress which, in the absence of some other central organisation has, out of all proportion to its strength and genuineness, affected the working class—the desire on the part of some to get themselves nominated as representatives of labour in international conferences. It is obvious that this origin has vitiated all its activities throughout these years. Therefore it need not be a surprise to those who are not conversant with the working of the A.I.T.U.C. that the exercise of this prerogative as a central organisation to nominate representatives to conferences and committees in India and abroad and the passing of a set of resolutions at intervals practically exhaust the range of the activities of the A. I. T. U. C. It takes no hand in the organisation of the working class. It has failed to develop, as it has already been stated, a strong and sound trade union basis for the labour movement in the country. As is well known, it has not touched more than a small fraction of the wage-earners in the country. In many cases, the trade unions lack the essential attribute of an effective organisation of labour, and

wherever they have functioned, it is our painful duty to point out that they have acted merely as strike committees. The numerous strikes and their failure to redress grievances betray, if anything, the weakness of the movement. It is a matter of common knowledge that organised labour wins its fights by collective bargaining, drawing its sanction from the power of sustained resistance which it acquires by its constructive activity. This has not been done in this country. For, it has been a matter of common experience and history that the gains labour has been able to secure by strikes, a very heavy price has been paid in the form of loss of wages to workers and production of goods and services to the community, not to speak of the complete demoralisation these strikes have brought in their train. At best, it can be stated, that the present A. I. T. U. C. is a loose federation of labour claiming to speak in the name of an inchoate labour movement in India.

**You cannot
let things drift
any more**

Situated as the country is to-day, no trade unionist can permit the present state of the trade union movement continue any longer. The Communists, who are practically controlling the central organisation are, as everybody is aware, the perpetual enemies of any established authority in this country and they will seek to keep the country in a disturbed state in order to suit the international aims of a foreign power or to bring about conditions favourable to violent upheavals and turmoil. It is really a sad commentary on the activities of all the trade union workers that even after twenty-five years of the working of the Trade Union Congress, the workers in the factories and workshops have not been brought up to a state of conscious citizenship which could and ought to play its role in the future reconstruction of society.

**A.I.T.U.C's
attitude
towards
arbitration**

It is also a matter of very great regret that the A. I. T. U. C. has done the greatest disservice to the working class by taking up an altogether indefensible stand in the matter of arbitration. Under the present laws in the country, disputes are not compulsorily referred to arbitration as a matter of course but the State has the power to refer disputes to arbitration or adjudication in particular circumstances. What methods should be adopted to redress grievances and solve the economic problems of the working class in the country,

is entirely a question which should be decided on the merits of each case. No dogma can help make the choice. The situation in the country and the strength of the working class in the matter of organisation and its moral strength shall and must decide the correct course. If the country is to evolve a just order of society and build up a social structure, where there is no exploitation of any kind, and if it is to be done on democratic and peaceful lines, there is no escape from the acceptance of arbitration as the best means of adjusting the relations between different sections of the society. In the present context in Indian conditions doctrinaire harping on the right of the working class to strike cannot be more than an indulgence in academic and theoretical discussion.

Worker—the scape-goat of a theoretical vindication of right to strike

The slogan of "strike" at such a critical juncture is not only un-patriotic but highly reactionary in its effect. Strike as a weapon for the redress of grievances or for securing fundamental rights cannot achieve its purpose without the backing of public opinion and public opinion is the final arbiter in any dispute. Society which gets its sustenance from continuous production cannot be expected to remain unconcerned when dislocation of production results from its theoretical vindication of the slogan of right to strike which, as every union worker knows, has done the greatest harm to the working class in the country.

Working-class generally averse to strikes

It has been the experience of the trade union workers, who decided to launch the new central organization, that the working class, left to itself, is generally averse to strikes if other means of redress are available. But the Communist have, by their misleading and suicidal slogan of strike designed to serve their own political ends, made the working class utterly irresponsible and act to the detriment of their own interests. It is this senseless and meaningless harping on strikes and nothing but strikes, which is responsible for the palpable weakness in the trade union movement.

What the new organisation stands for

The above prefatory remarks supply the background for the new organisation, the *Indian National Trade Union Congress*. It is a long-felt urge on the part of genuine friends of the working class and their desire to help it attain its full status and stature of citizenship in free India.

that is the foundational inspiration for the new organization, designed to function on non communal and non-party lines and in such a manner as to promote the national and economic integrity and strength of the country. It will strive to achieve the highest attainable social status and standard of life for workers of all categories and in consonance with the just and human claims of all sections of the community. It will be its aim to unite on one platform all those who adhere to the ideal of equalitarian society—rid of every form of exploitation—and believe in its accomplishment through democratic and peaceful means. The new organization keeps before itself the ideal of evolving a society in which every individual member will be free to develop his personality without any let or hindrance and not steam-rolled into a set pattern.

The social order that INTU.C. wants to usher in

The objectives of the Indian National Trade Union Congress have been very clearly defined in its constitution and it would be appropriate to mention them here. The Indian National Trade Union Congress aims at establishing an order of society which is free from hindrances in the way of all-round development of its individual members, which encourages the growth of human personality in all its aspects and goes to the utmost limit in eliminating social, political and economic exploitation, the profit motive in the economic activity in the organization of society and anti-social concentration of power in any form. It is also the aspiration of this organization to work in such a way as to place industry under national ownership and control by reasoned public opinion, with a view to eliminate individual exploitation and profit. The Indian National Trade Union Congress believes that the worker engaged in any industry should have as much interest and responsibility in the production and distribution of its product as the community itself. He is not to be considered as an appendage to the machine but regarded as an essential living part of the industry in which he is working and, it is his right and therefore his duty to participate in the administration and control of actual production.

Fundamental rights of the worker

This aim cannot naturally be achieved and fully realised unless the worker is freed from all his human wants. The worker in industry is expected by society to work efficiently and with a sense of responsibility but society, in its turn should ensure that all his material and spiritual wants are

adequately provided for. A living wage, provision for sickness, old age and unemployment, safeguarding of his civic and political rights and his full participation in the task of forging a new social and economic order of society are the essential conditions which the community should ensure.

The country presents a large untouched and inviting field

The Indian National Trade Union Congress is pledged to achieve the aforesaid objectives by peaceful and democratic means. With this end in view, the Indian National Trade Union Congress will strive to approach the rank and file of the workers in the country and urge them to form organizations. The task before this Congress is not only to co-ordinate, guide and conduct the activities of the unions affiliated to it, but also inevitably to organize the workers into trade unions where they are not organized. The field for such organization is very vast as workers in large and small industries are, to-day, mostly unorganized and require correct lead in their own interests as well as those of the country.

The new organization is neither a challenge nor a rival to any organization that may be working. It is conceived only as an instrument of a new positive approach and as a technique of labour organization that experience, over a period of years, has taught. The existing Trade Union Congress has failed to deliver the goods on behalf of the mute and unorganized working class. The Indian National Trade Union Congress is an attempt to go to the working class, with a new and fresh approach towards a solution of their problems and it is for the working class to decide whether to accept its lead. The sponsors of the Indian National Trade Union Congress are no strangers to the trade union movement and because of their mature experience, they are confident of an enthusiastic response to their call from the working class of the land. The working classes know the price they had to pay for having followed the lead of a body which for all practical purposes exploited them to serve its own political or personal ends. The new organization, sets before itself the responsible task of contributing its due share to the building up of the nation in its newly acquired freedom. It will always lend its weight and influence in the national sphere towards the democratization of all institutions which are bound to spring up in the course of the country's endeavour to rise out of the morass of the present helpless

condition. With adult suffrage assured, by the new constitution, the working class, if properly organized, and made to realise its rights and responsibilities in the new set-up is bound to play an effective role in the country. The Indian National Trade Union Congress has before it a very heavy and onerous programme of action ; but it will have in its task the willing co-operation of the working class, which is growing conscious. It is the duty of the new organization to guide this consciousness into desirable channels so as to secure the maximum benefit to them and the nation. The attitude of the body to some of the burning questions of the day has been made clear by the following two resolutions, the committee adopted and it is for the country and the working class to judge whether the organisation reflects their view point.

“This Committee has reviewed the recommendations of the Central Pay Commission and it welcomes the recommendations of the Commission as a first step in the progressive socio-economic policy of the State. Some of the recommendations do not go far enough, and will not carry full satisfaction to those whom it affects. The attempt to lay down the National Minimum Wage at Rs. 30/- plus Rs. 25/- for unskilled labour and at Rs. 55/- plus Rs. 35/- for the literate and educated employees though, as mentioned below, is linked to the cost of living index at 160, will render very useful service to the working class of the country and will substantially raise the standard of those who are at present paid starvation wages. The Committee appreciates the recommendations of the Commission that the State should give medical and educational facilities to that section of its employees who were up to now deprived of those essential needs which form a very heavy charge on the family budget. The Commission has properly recognised and given effect to the State's obligation towards its employees with regard to their medical and educational needs. In a free India, we envisage equal opportunities for all, and it is proper that the State should begin to undertake the most important social function from even now. This would necessarily give a lead to other employers who, out of a purely profit motive, behave very callously towards their employees. The Committee does not consider all the recommendations of the Commission as satisfying the needs of the third and the fourth classes of

Govt., employees, and feels that the cases of some of them, particularly class four employees, requires reconsideration as early as possible. But looking to the known National income of the country, the attempt to prescribe the National Minimum was a difficult task and therefore the Committee commends the efforts of the Commission in that direction. The Committee does not accept the conclusion that wages should be stabilized when the cost of living index reaches 160, obviating the necessity of payment of dearness allowance. The Committee feels that for a considerable time to come the cost of living will continue to remain high and that a minimum scale of Rs. 30/- would hardly be adequate to compensate the workers even when the index reaches 160. The Committee does not share the view of the Commission that the salary scales of higher paid servants of the State cannot be reduced and brought down below Rs. 2,000/- per month. Looking at the poor resources of this country, it would have been proper that at least the higher salaries of the new entrants in the services should have been fixed at the maximum of Rs. 1,250. Payment of dearness allowance to those getting high salaries is an unnecessary burden on the poor tax-payers of the country. The Committee feels that the Commission has failed to take into consideration the annual national income while fixing the maximum salary of Rs. 2,000/- in addition to dearness allowance of Rs. 150. The gap between the maximum and the minimum is too glaring to be ignored in view of the social and economic conditions of the country which cannot afford to pay very high salaries to its servants. The arguments advanced in support of the conclusions with regard to maximum salary are unconvincing as the State itself should set the standard for ceiling salaries and should enforce that standard on industry and commerce by the inherent power of the State in the matter of taxation.

“The Committee does not approve of the Commission's recommendation raising the age limit for retirement to 58 as the Committee feels that in the free atmosphere of the new freedom that the nation has achieved, new and fresher blood with imagination is essential for national reconstruction.”

“The Committee further recommends that all Provincial Governments and other major Statutory Local Authorities

should take early steps with a view to implement the recommendations of the Commission so as to carry satisfaction to their employees in whom expectations have naturally been created."

" The Committee feels that the acceptance of the division of India into two parts, even though inevitable in the present circumstances due to a feeling of separatism deliberately fostered and encouraged by the foreign rulers to keep up their domination, is detrimental to the interest of the toiling masses of the country. No trade union movement can grow strong in communal or sectional environments. However, the Committee hopes that the division may be only a temporary phase in the struggle for freedom. The toiling masses of the country, in whichever part of the country they may be living, have a common purpose to achieve, namely, the end of all exploitation including the exploitation based on sectional, communal or religious grounds. Their common aim is to tackle the problems of unemployment, poverty and other social handicaps. The division of the country will retard the progress of the masses at least for some time to come.

The Committee however, expects that trade unions in the country will not encourage any separatist tendencies or movements but create a spirit of mutual tolerance and brotherhood eventually leading to a movement for unification under the auspices of the National Trade Union Movement. The Committee expects trade union workers not to be misled by communal shibboleths and partisan slogans but to work for the unity of the trade union movement in India under the banner of the Indian National Trade Union Congress."

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN INDIA

S. C. JOSHI

Chief Labour Commissioner, Government of India

Shri S. C. Joshi tells us how during and between the two inter-war years the Indian Trade Union Movement acquired greater strength and a wider range. The employers in India are still indifferent and even hostile in their attitude towards unions of their employees ; as acceptance of the rightful place of Unions as an integral and vital part of the socio-economic pattern of modern society is slow in coming, Government have had to propose legislation for compulsory recognition of Trade Unions. The Trade Disputes Act, 1929 has been replaced by the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 ; better and more adequate Industrial Relations machinery has been set up. But the best legislation and governmental machinery will be of no avail if the garnering of industrial peace is not treated as an eminently worth while co-operative adventure.

MAINTENANCE of satisfactory industrial relations between employers and workmen forms an important plank in the labour policy of every civilised nation. Success of industrial development largely depends upon harmonious relations and co-operation between the employers and the human element of the industry. Such industrial relations, in their turn, depend upon many factors. In the first place, there should exist properly developed organisations of workers, appreciating the value of the rule of law. Secondly, the employers and their organisations should recognize and appreciate the value of human element in industry and they must realise their responsibility to their workers. Thirdly, there must be adequate machinery for the promotion and settlement of threatened and existing trade disputes.

The two wars gave a fillip to Trade Unionism

In India, the trade union movement may still be regarded to be in its infancy. The movement was started only after World War I, which created a consciousness amongst the industrial workers. They appreciated the need of joint resistance to exploitation through collective action. This consciousness continued to grow throughout the period between the two World Wars. During this period there was a steady development of and increase in the trade unions in this country. On the passing of the Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926, trade unions received an impetus. The Act gave a status to registered trade unions. It also specified the rights, privileges and obligations of such unions. During the recent war, this growth of trade unions was steadily maintained. Now that the war is over, workers have become more conscious of their rights and of the value and importance of collective action. The socio-economic upheaval in the country has been responsible for this awakening among the workers.

Statistics do not afford a complete picture

An idea of the extent of the growth of trade unions in British India can be judged from the following figures of trade unions registered under the Trade Unions Act, 1926, and their membership from 1927-28 to 1943-44.

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of regd. trade unions</i>	<i>Total membership</i>
1927-28	29	100,619
1928-29	75	181,077
1929-30	104	242,355

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of regd. trade unions</i>	<i>Total membership</i>
1930-31	119	219,115
1931-32	131	235,693
1932-33	170	237,369
1933-34	191	208,071
1934-35	213	284,918
1935-36	241	268,326
1936-37	271	261,047
1937-38	420	390,112
1938-39	562	399,159
1939-40	667	511,138
1940-41	727	513,832
1941-42	747	573,520
1942-43	693	685,299
1943-44	818	780,967

These figures, however, do not give a complete picture, as there are many unregistered unions of industrial, non-industrial and of Government and semi-Government bodies. They have been in existence and are functioning for a pretty long time. In the province of Bombay itself, where statistics of unregistered trade unions are maintained their number is 200, with a membership of 88,010 on the first June, 1946.

National and Industrial Unions

The Indian trade union movement also works on national and industrial lines. The oldest national trade union organisation is the All-India Trade Union Congress, established in 1920. The Indian Federation of Labour came into existence in 1942. Another such organisation which was recently formed is the Indian National Trade Union Congress. There also exist federations of trade unions of workers in different industries such as Railways, Textiles, Mines, Shipping, and Posts and Telegraphs.

Notwithstanding such development, as observed by the Royal Commission on Labour, the need of organization among Indian workers is very great.

Employers have not yet out-grown their hostility to Trade Unions

The employers in India are fairly organised on national and industrial lines. Their attitude towards the unions of the workers has been far from satisfactory. At the earlier stage, a majority of the employers were hostile and refused to recognise or negotiate with the unions. While there is a considerable improvement in their attitude, a good deal of indifference, if not hostility, still exists. The Government bill

for compulsory recognition of trade unions is before the Central Assembly, as reported by the Select Committee to which it was referred. Barring a certain number of good employers, many of them have failed to recognize the value of the human element in the industry and their responsibility to provide proper working conditions and measures for the welfare and well-being of their workers, both inside and outside the factory. The establishment of the Tripartite Labour Conference has, however, brought about a change in the employer's attitude towards their workers and their organisations. They are becoming more and more responsive.

It will be seen that the first two essentials for the maintenance of good industrial relations are not altogether absent in India, although they have not yet been fully and adequately developed.

**Lacunae in
the Trade
Disputes act,
1929**

The Trade Disputes Act, 1929, for the first time created statutory machinery for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes. The Act empowered the appropriate Governments to refer industrial disputes to a Board of Conciliation or a Court of Inquiry. In the case of public utility services, the Act imposed an obligation on the workers and employers to give a fourteen days' notice for a strike and a lockout respectively. Strikes without such notice as well as political and sympathetic strikes were made illegal and punishable under the Act. The Act, however, was limited in its scope. There was no obligation on Government to refer the disputes either to a Board of Conciliation or a Court of Inquiry. Further, the Government had no authority to enforce the findings or recommendations of such bodies. The original Act did not provide for the creation of standing machinery to deal with the first manifestations of discontent and to attempt to bring about a settlement by conciliation at the initial stage of a dispute. This latter drawback was, however, rectified in 1938 by the addition of sec. 18-A, which provides for the appointment of Conciliation Officers "charged with the duty of mediating in or promoting the settlement of trade disputes". In the Province of Bombay there were two enactments, *vis.*, the Bombay Conciliation Act (Act I of 1934) and the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938. The latter Act, though wide in scope, has been made applicable only to the textile industry in the Bombay Province.

War exigencies demanded supplemental legislation and greater attention to welfare

The Trade Disputes Act, 1929, was found to be wholly inadequate to cope up with the exigencies created by the war. It was, therefore, supplemented by war time legislation, namely, the Defence of India Act and the Rules framed thereunder. Rule 81-A empowered the Central Government to issue general or special orders for prohibiting strikes or lockouts and for requiring employers and workmen to observe certain terms and conditions of employment. It also authorized the Government to refer any trade dispute to conciliation or adjudication and to enforce the award of the adjudicator. By a special order issued by Government, fourteen days' previous notice in writing was made compulsory for a strike or lockout in any undertaking. Strikes were also made illegal during the continuance of the conciliation or adjudication proceedings, two months thereafter and during the period when the award was made binding. These powers were freely exercised and many trade disputes were referred to adjudication and the awards enforced.

In December 1937, the Government of India appointed a Conciliation Officer for Railways with headquarters at Calcutta and charged him with the duties of mediating in apprehended or threatened disputes and promoting the settlement of actual disputes. The Conciliation Officer (Railways) was notified as a conciliator under the Trade Disputes Act, 1929. This organization under the Conciliation Officer (Railways) was placed on a permanent footing in 1939 after merging it with that of the Supervisor of Railway Labour, which was set up to give effect to the Indian Railways (Amendment) Act, 1930.

The peculiar position created by the war necessitated greater attention towards welfare of labour and to look after the welfare of labour employed in Central undertakings (other than Railways) the Government of India appointed a Labour Welfare Adviser in 1942. A Deputy Labour Welfare Adviser and 8 Assistant Labour Welfare Advisers were also appointed.

In 1945 the two organizations - the Conciliation Officer (Railways) and Supervisor of Railway Labour, and the Labour Welfare Adviser - were amalgamated and augmented to constitute what is now known as Industrial Relations Machinery.

**The set-up of
Industrial
Relations
Machinery**

Industrial Relations Machinery was set up to deal with and promote industrial relations in industries and undertakings falling under the Central sphere, *vis.*, all industrial establishments and other undertakings owned or controlled by the Government of India, Federal Railways, Mines and Oilfields, and Major Ports as defined in the Indian Ports Act, 1908. The organization at present consists of—

One Chief Labour Commissioner and one Assistant Labour Commissioner with headquarters at New Delhi;

Three Regional Labour Commissioners at Calcutta, Bombay and Lahore;

One Central Inspector of Industrial Canteens at New Delhi;

Nine Conciliation Officers in different provinces; and
Thirty Labour Inspectors located at various centres throughout India.

They are in charge of conciliation of labour disputes, labour welfare, excluding welfare in coal mines for which separate organization exists under the Coal Mines Welfare Commissioner, and the operation of labour laws to the extent to which their administration is a Central responsibility, except so far as separate machinery has been provided, e. g., Controller of Emigrant Labour.

**They have a
very wide
field**

The main functions of the machinery in connection with conciliation and labour welfare include:—

- (a) assistance in the formation and maintenance of voluntary machinery in industrial establishments;
 - (b) prevention and settlement of trade disputes;
 - (c) maintenance of information regarding wage rates and conditions of work;
 - (d) maintaining continuous touch with the state of relations between employers and work-people;
- and (e) examination of welfare measures and advice to employers and Government in connection therewith.

For dealing with industrial disputes falling within the Provincial sphere the Provincial Governments have set up a permanent and *ad hoc* machinery.

Agency for tripartite consultation and co-operation

In addition to these steps, the Central Government have also set up a tripartite conference consisting of the representatives of Governments—Central, Provincial, and States—the employers & the workers. The periodical meetings of the Conference and of its Standing Committee aim at securing better understanding between the parties concerned and greater co-operation amongst them. It enables Government to understand and appreciate the view-points of the employers and the workers in regard to matters affecting labour.

But strikes kept on increasing

Although these steps went a long way in easing the labour situation in the country during the period of war, the number of strikes and the loss of working days involved during the war years did not fall as compared with the pre-war years, as can be seen from the following table : —

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of strikes</i>	<i>No. of work people involved</i>	<i>No. of working days lost</i>
1930	148	196,301	2,261,731
1931	166	203,008	4,408,123
1932	118	128,099	1,922,437
1933	146	164,938	2,168,961
1934	159	220,808	4,775,559
1935	145	114,217	973,475
1936	157	169,029	2,358,062
1937	379	647,801	8,982,257
1938	399	401,075	9,198,708
1939	406	409,189	4,992,795
1940	322	452,539	7,577,288
1941	359	291,054	3,330,503
1942	654	820,495	5,293,027
1943	645	365,666	1,355,473
1944	658	550,015	3,447,306
1945	843	780,545	3,471,218
1946	1,825	2,310,239	12,285,215

Better and more adequate machinery had to be devised

History demonstrates that the economic upheaval created by war leads to labour unrest. After the termination of second World War, Indian workers have become very restive. They expect and demand relief in regard to their wages, hours of work, security of service, conditions of service, welfare and general well-being. Experience found the machinery for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes wanting and in need of overhaul and wartime legislation had to be

repealed after the cessation of hostilities. An elaborate and effective machinery for this purpose had, therefore, to be devised and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 was the result.

Works Committees a special feature of new legislation

With a view to preventing industrial disputes from taking a serious turn, provision for Works Committees has been made. The duty of a Works Committee will be to promote measures for securing and preserving amity and good relations between the employer and workmen and to that end to comment upon matters of common interest or concern and to endeavour and compose any material differences of opinion in respect of such matters. The Works Committee shall consist of representatives of employers and workmen. The number of representatives of workmen on the Committee shall not be less than the number of representatives of the employers and shall be chosen in consultation with their trade union. The provision for Works Committees is a special feature of the new Act.

Certain important features of the new act

Furthermore, the Act provides for the establishment of a permanent Conciliation machinery, besides Conciliation Boards, Courts of Inquiry and Industrial Tribunals. Reference to a Board or a Tribunal is compulsory in the case of public utility services. This is a special benefit conferred on the workmen of the public utility services as a compensation for the obligation imposed upon them to give 14 days' notice of strike. No reference, however, need be made if the Government considers that the notice has been given frivolously or vexatiously or that it would be inexpedient to make such a reference. A time limit of 14 days has been fixed for the completion of conciliation proceedings by a Conciliation Officer. Similarly, the time limit of two months has been fixed for completion of the proceedings of the Board of Conciliation. Government, however, may extend the time by a further period not exceeding two months in the aggregate. Industrial Tribunals have to hold their proceedings expeditiously. A settlement reached through the Conciliation Board and award given by Tribunal can be made binding on the parties.

Illegal strikes and lockouts

Strikes and lockouts without 14 days' notice in the public utility services have been made illegal. Strikes and lockouts are also illegal during the pendency of conciliation proceedings before a Board and 7 days thereafter, during the pendency of proceedings before a Tribunal and two months

thereafter, and during the period in which a settlement or an award is in operation in respect of any of the matters covered by the settlement or the award.

The Bombay Industrial Disputes Act, 1938, has been recently replaced by the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, a more comprehensive measure framed in the light of the experience gained in the working of the former Act.

**It is a
co-operative
adventure**

The machinery for prevention and settlement of industrial disputes as now provided in the new Act will, it is hoped, go a long way in securing contentment and peace in industry, which are so essential for the industrial development of the country. Shortage of essential articles and necessaries of life is very great. Production of these articles must go on unhampered. The efficiency of our workers must be increased. But the existence of an adequate machinery will, however, not be sufficient. What is essential is a correct appreciation and understanding of the requirements of the country as a whole and of the workers engaged in industry. A heavy responsibility lies on the Government, employers and workmen. Each party should give its full co-operation, without which provision of the machinery, however good it may be, will not succeed. It may be hoped that such co-operation will come in the largest measure and in the best interests of everybody concerned.

COMPULSORY ARBITRATION IN LABOUR DISPUTES

N. V. PHADKE

Assistant Secretary, All-India Trade Union Congress, Bombay

Shri Phadke's thesis is that recent Indian legislation to enforce compulsory arbitration would, in effect, defeat its very purpose as instead of building up peace, it is bound to create greater disaffection. Compulsory arbitration is a weapon of war, not of peace as it sets out to deny Trade Unions their fundamental right of collective bargaining, and strike—and makes them stand at bay. The road to peace is the way of substantial improvement in the conditions of work and life of the working masses and designing of simple machinery for the settlement of disputes.

THE SUBJECT of compulsory arbitration in labour disputes has been, for some time past, agitating the minds of industrial workers in India. This is due to the fact that the Government of India recently passed an Act called the Industrial Disputes Act, under the provisions of which arbitration can be compulsorily imposed to settle labour disputes in many industries and occupations including transport, coal, cotton textile, foodstuffs and iron and steel. Similarly, some Provincial Governments including Bombay and the Central Provinces and Berar have also enacted legislation under which compulsory arbitration has been introduced to deal with labour disputes. Under Sec. 73 of the Bombay Industrial Relations Act, for instance, Government is empowered to refer any industrial dispute to the arbitration of the Industrial Court without the consent of the workers, under certain circumstances. These circumstances, however, are so widely termed that the Government can impose compulsory arbitration in almost any dispute. Since compulsory arbitration implies the denial of the right to strike, it is needless to point out that under the legislation referred to above strikes would be illegal as soon as a dispute is referred to arbitration.

The introduction of the principle of compulsory arbitration in peace-time, accompanied by the prohibition of strikes, has been strongly resented and opposed by organised labour in India represented by the All-India Trade Union Congress. The advocates of compulsory arbitration are equally insistent on its desirability so much so that they have made it a matter of principle and have incorporated it in the constitution of a newly formed, Government sponsored institution called the 'Indian National Trade Union Congress.'

Under these circumstances, it is necessary to examine the question of compulsory arbitration from an objective point of view.

**Compulsory
arbitration is
no arbitration
at all**

In the first instance, it may be pointed out that compulsory arbitration is a contradiction in terms. Arbitration really implies the *willingness* of the parties concerned to submit their differences to a third party for decision. In other words, it implies *voluntary* action of the parties and carries

with it the willing acceptance by each party of its responsibility for the consequences. Compulsory arbitration, therefore, really means an imposition by an outside agency without the consent of the parties. It is thus obvious that if this element of compulsion from outside is introduced, the process ceases to be arbitration altogether. As a matter of fact, as Sydney Webb has aptly pointed out, the so-called compulsory arbitration is not arbitration at all in the real sense of the term, but it simply represents the decision of a Court or a third party in a dispute.

Constitutes denial of a fundamental right

One of the strongest objections to compulsory arbitration is that it involves a denial of collective bargaining. A trade union is an organisation of workers whose principal function is to bargain collectively with employers for securing improvement in their conditions. Under legislation imposing compulsory arbitration, a trade union, in effect, is not permitted to bargain effectively with the employers in as much as strikes are not permitted by law. Since workers are not generally in a position to bargain effectively with employers without the right to strike, the denial of the right to strike amounts to a denial of an opportunity for collective bargaining. When a trade union has no scope even for collective bargaining, which is its fundamental function, it ceases to serve any useful purpose as a trade union except perhaps as a legal aid society to help its members to present their case properly before the Court of Arbitration. In other words, compulsory arbitration strikes at the root of the trade union movement.

Tantamount to arrogation of legislative powers by courts

It is for the same reason that Sydney Webb, one of the greatest authorities on labour problems, was opposed to compulsory arbitration. As he puts it, by compulsory arbitration we 'supersede collective bargaining altogether.' In fact, Sydney Webb summarises the whole position by saying that compulsory arbitration amounts to legislation by courts. It is highly objectionable in principle that the power of making decisions having the force of law should be delegated to a Court, however eminent it may be. The function of making laws really belongs to the legislature which represents the will of the people unlike a court of law. A court of law is only meant to interpret law and give its decisions and not to make law itself. But under the legislation making arbitration compulsory, the industrial court has been empowered not to

interpret any existing labour law but, in fact, to make laws in the form of arbitration awards.

Are arbitrators free from class bias ?

Another defect in compulsory arbitration is that the arbitrator is imposed upon the parties without their consent, while under the system of voluntary arbitration or conciliation the arbitrator or the conciliator is a person who is acceptable to both the parties. Even under our ancient system of resolving disputes by referring them to *Gram Panchayats*, it is significant that the parties generally refer their dispute to a mutually acceptable person. Moreover, an arbitrator in a labour dispute is generally a person belonging to the social group having sympathies with the employer-class. This class bias on the part of the arbitrator generally works against the interests of the workers. As Sydney Webb has rightly pointed out, these arbitrators are 'unconsciously imbued rather with the assumptions of the class in which they live than with those of the workmen.'

Legislation of near-slavery

Legislation imposing compulsory arbitration and rendering strikes illegal amounts to giving legal sanction to involuntary servitude or serfdom. Mr. N. M. Joshi, General Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress, was right when he pointed out in the Central Legislative Assembly that the Industrial Disputes Bill of the Government of India had in it an 'element of slavery' in-as-much-as it compels workers to remain tied to their jobs against their will. Referring to similar legislation contemplated in the U.S.A., the American labour movement described its provisions as tantamount to recognition of slavery. To quote the actual words of the American Federation of Labour, "the workers of America will never submit to slavery, nor will they work against their will under conditions which are obnoxious to them."

American Federation of Labour launches an eight pronged attack against compulsory arbitration

It would be instructive to know the various grounds on which the American labour movement is 'unalterably opposed to compulsory arbitration'. In the first place, they are opposed to it because 'resort to compulsory arbitration would promote and prolong industrial disputes'. Secondly, 'compulsory arbitration undermines self-government' in industry. Thirdly, 'compulsory arbitration takes away from employers and unions the responsibility for working out their mutual problems and transfers it to Government created tribunals'. Fourthly, compulsory arbitration

'kills collective bargaining and replaces it with litigation'. Fifthly, 'by requiring even an hour of compulsory labour, it (compulsory arbitration) would subject Americans to involuntary servitude'. Sixthly, 'compulsory arbitration exposes workers to arbitrary restraints and penalties before trial and convictions'. Seventhly, it 'denies the working people the right to protest and resist a wrong and to strive peacefully for improvement in their condition'. Lastly, compulsory arbitration 'means loss of the personal freedom, loss of mobility, loss of the power of initiative, loss of hope and aspiration for self-betterment'.

**Does not
serve its
intended
purpose :
Kansas
Experiment**

It is argued by the advocates of compulsory arbitration that it would promote peace in industry by minimising the number of strikes. But, experience has shown that this is not true. When compulsory arbitration was resorted to in some countries during war-time, it was found that it did not succeed in minimising strikes. To quote the economist of the American Federation of Labour: "The record of compulsory arbitration tried in the United States under State Laws proves that it in no way diminishes strikes or work-stoppages. After the first world war, a compulsory arbitration law was enacted in Kansas. The law set up a compulsory Labour Court with jurisdiction over rail, roads, public utilities, coal and food. Its enactment ushered in one of the most violent strike periods in the history of the State. The use of the court was abandoned long before it was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court".

**Australia and
Britain tell a
similar tale**

Experience in Australia also is the same. In spite of the provision of compulsory arbitration, Australia has been the most strike-ridden country in the world. In proportion to population, it has had almost twice as many strikes as the United States. "Since V. J. Day, strikes in Australia have reached an all-time height." Experience in New Zealand shows that the relative strike record of this country was considerably worse than that of the United States. Further, in Great Britain also the story was repeated when the country resorted to compulsory arbitration as a war-time measure. Referring to the period of the first world war, the *Industrial Relations Hand-book*, issued by the British Ministry of Labour, admits: "Despite the legal prohibition of stoppages of work and the acceptance of compulsory arbitration, there

developed at the mid-period of war areas of unrest throughout the country." This was in spite of the fact that the British labour movement had accepted compulsory arbitration as a war-time emergency measure. As rightly summed up in a publication recently issued by the United States Department of Labour, "the prohibition of strikes and lock-outs and legislative requirements for the arbitration of disputes without interruption of work have not prevented stoppages of varying degrees of severity. The seriousness of the strikes has been determined by economic conditions rather than by legislation."

**Right to
Strike is
related to
employment
seen as a
civil contract
between
equals**

The British Trade Union Movement as well as public opinion in England are opposed to compulsory arbitration. The famous Whitley Committee appointed by the British Government, which examined this question in great detail, expressed the view that they were opposed to any system of Compulsory Arbitration. The Committee further stated: "There is no reason to believe that such a system is generally desired by employers and employed, and, in the absence of such general acceptance, it is obvious that its imposition would lead to unrest...For the same reason, we do not recommend any scheme relating to conciliation which compulsorily prevents strikes or lock-outs pending inquiry." This view was expressed by the Committee as early as 1918. Since then, public opinion in England has not changed on this question. To quote from a recent publication issued by the British Ministry of Labour: "British workers attach importance to the right to strike...The right to strike is bound up with the conception of employment as a civil contract between equals. Workers seek to maintain this principle and regard the right to strike as the expression of their individual and collective rights in industry. For this reason, compulsory arbitration and the prohibition of strikes are unlikely to be successfully established as a permanent feature of industrial relations. They are accepted in war-time as being necessary for the conduct of the war. In peace-time, British experience so far shows that voluntary methods are more likely to achieve their purpose than compulsion and penalties. As has been pointed out above, even when compulsory arbitration was resorted to in Great Britain as a war-time measure, it was not really compulsory. It was not imposed on the workers against their wishes but

was agreed to by them as a war-time emergency measure. But, in India, compulsory arbitration is being imposed upon the workers not only without their consent, but in spite of their opposition ; and not as a war-time emergency measure but as a permanent method of dealing with labour disputes. In fact, it is being elevated to the status of a principle.

Universal protest against this denial of an elementary right

What has been stated above shows that the attitude of the labour movement in this country, as represented by the All-India Trade Union Congress, is the same as that adopted by the labour movements in other progressive countries including Great Britain. The I.L.O. has also expressed itself against compulsory arbitration. A resolution adopted by the I.L.O. at the Third Labour Conference of the American States held in 1946 has clearly laid down that the workers' right to collective bargaining should be fully protected. As explained earlier in this article, compulsory arbitration and prohibition of strikes amount to a denial of collective bargaining. This means that the resolution of the I.L.O. referred to above does not favour compulsory arbitration which is a negation of collective bargaining.

The Royal Commission's prophecy

The Royal Commission on Labour in India also objected to compulsory arbitration as a method of dealing with industrial disputes. The Commission stated that "the objections to any scheme involving the compulsory reference of all disputes to arbitration are formidable, quite apart from the practical difficulties that confront such a proposal. We believe that the effect on industry would be disastrous if there was a general tendency to look to some external authority to preserve industrial peace and to discourage settlement by the industry itself". Recent events have shown that the attempts on the part of Governments in this country to maintain peace in industry by resorting to compulsion and penalties in labour disputes have miserably failed as the Royal Commission predicted.

You cannot coerce large sections of men

Legislation declaring strikes illegal is also objectionable from the point of view of maintaining law and order in society. As the Royal Commission rightly pointed out, 'it would be impossible to coerce large numbers of men into accepting terms on which they are unwilling to work'. The mere legal prohibition of a strike may not in practice prevent work-people from going on an illegal strike. Respect for law is

bound to be undermined as a result of such illegal strikes. It is, therefore, unwise to enact laws which are very likely to be disregarded by a large section of the community.

**The only
way out**

The only way to maintain stable peace in industry is to secure substantial improvements in the conditions of the working classes which are, at present, admittedly, below the minimum human standards. When this is done, the number of strikes can also be further minimised by bringing into operation a simple and speedy machinery for the settlement of disputes on a voluntary basis, under which full scope is given to collective bargaining. Many strikes can be avoided if Government can bring together representatives of both labour and capital under a system of voluntary conciliation. That such a system has eminently succeeded in Great Britain is recognised both by employers and work-people in that country. In India, here is great distrust in the minds of employers about trade unions and their leaders. It is this distrust which prevents both the parties from coming together for the purpose of negotiating a settlement. It is, therefore, necessary to set up a machinery under which collective bargaining between the parties will be encouraged. This would lead to speedy settlement of disputes. It is only such a method of voluntary conciliation as opposed to compulsory arbitration that can minimise strife in industry.

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO TO BETTER INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

SIR JAMES DOAK

Madura Mills Co., Ltd.

"There are many things employers can do", says Sir James Doak, though effective reorientation can only come through triangular co-operation among the Workers, Employers and the State. In an atmosphere where many an employer is cold if not antagonistic to Unions, it is rather bracing to be told by Sir James that the existence of an independent spirited and self-respecting Trade Union is the very fundament of Industrial Relations. Great stress is laid on the task of freeing the worker from the "petty tyranny" of the official subordinates; democratic management of co-operative stores by the Union; the creation of a sense of belonging and oneness by bonuses linked to shareholders

dividends ; financing of the education of the children of the work-people. Sir James welcomes not a "contented" labour force but one bitten by the bug of "divine discontent"; aspiring towards better standards that can only come through better output.

MOST progressive employers today can point to various welfare and amenity schemes for their employees; but, to my mind, such schemes, however good, cannot go to the heart of the problems facing India. The objective to be aimed at is the building up of a self-respecting, responsible, healthy, educated body of workers, capable of coming within reasonable distance of the productivity of workers in the industrial West. No single employer, however well-intentioned, can hope to achieve the entire objective—many people and agencies, including Central and Provincial Governments, necessarily come into the picture.

Subject to the foregoing qualifications, there are many things employers can do. What follows is an indication of the line adopted over a period of years by the Madura Mills Co., Ltd., through its Managers, A. & F. Harvey Ltd., But there are no doubt other ways and means by which employers can arrive at somewhat similar results.

**Co-operation
with Trade
Unions:
Freedom from
petty tyranny
of Officials**

One thing is a *sine qua non*—the existence of a recognised Labour Union, independent in its policy but appreciating the fact that the interests of employees and employers are synonymous. Through working closely with such a union, it is possible to go a considerable way towards attaining the first two objectives—"Self-respecting and responsible". Engagement, promotion, punishment, dismissal,—matters which are sometimes considered mere disciplinary routine—are subject to constant check and discussion with the union. No longer are workers at the mercy of petty subordinates, as was the case a number of years ago; no more free servants in maistries' homes; no more bribes for transfers or promotions. Labour *must* be made to feel that all cases are treated on real merit and decisions based on sound principle. Much could be written on this subject—the various methods and abuses which have come to light through our association with the union—meantime it is sufficient for the present purpose to say that freeing workers from petty tyranny and abuses by subordinates has gone a long way to building up self-respect and responsibility.

**Democratic
management
of the co-op**

Responsibility has been further strengthened by handing over management of Co-operative Stores entirely to unions, the employers providing finance, subsidies and other assistance. This has proved very successful indeed, workers

feeling that the Stores are entirely their own property and that profits or losses are purely their concern.

**Bonus— as
an aid to
better
Relations**

A further aid to the growth of responsibility has been the introduction of a system, from 1938, of bonus payments to workers varying with dividends paid to shareholders. Originally based on a given attendance record, the scheme has improved absenteeism figures very materially, and has helped to make workers appreciate that their interests and the management's are really identical.

**Co-operator
with employ-
ers becomes
suspect**

While the foregoing deals with facts, unfortunately another fact must be faced. In present day conditions in India, a union which commits the "crime" of co-operating with employers stands to be shot at from all directions and becomes the target of extremist organisations. The growth of education, it is hoped, will gradually remedy this state of affairs, but I fear it will be many years before we can hope to see substantial progress in this matter.

**Education—
State should
lend a hand**

Speaking of education, our approach has been many sided. The management owns and runs schools in the workers' colonies, for the children of workers. The union, through an entirely separate organisation subsidised by the management, conducts schools for workers' children in other localities, while it also has adult education classes which are doing good work. All will agree, however, that the State has a duty in the matter of education which must be faced really boldly if reasonable progress is to be made in this vital matter.

**Poor Health
and low
productivity—
a vicious
circle to be
broken**

So far as health is concerned, the Company employs six doctors plus nurses and compounders, provides for medical leave with pay and maintains a ward in a hospital for the free treatment of its workers. However, over-crowded housing conditions in the immediate neighbourhood of our Mills still stand in the way of improving health generally, despite our efforts in housing colonies etc. Rationing and the absence of balanced diet also play their part in maintaining the vicious circle of poor health and low productivity. The State scheme of Sickness Insurance is to be welcomed although doubts may be expressed as to the availability of trained personnel to run it on the scale envisaged by its authors. Until general health conditions are materially

improved, there is little prospect of productivity being increased to any great extent.

**Self-respect
and increased
output**

Until a few years ago, our objective contained a further word—"Contented". In the narrow sense of having decent working conditions and adequate security of tenure, we would still subscribe to it. But in the larger sense, "No" It is to be hoped that India's workers will look to the progress made by their fellows in the West and aspire to the standards of living now obtaining in U. K. and elsewhere. Undoubtedly, progress has been made in this direction but we have still a very long way to go. A textile mill in South India has at least 3 times the number of workers as its fellow in Lancashire. So long as workers develop healthy aspirations of improved standards, appreciating that such standards can come only from increased out-put per man, then, an element of "discontent" can be a very good augury for India's future.

**A matter of
triangular
Co-operation**

We are passing through a disturbed phase in this year of "peace" of 1947. Workers throughout the world have the bit in their teeth. They have felt their strength and are making full use of it. If used with a measure of moderation, the results must be beneficial. Far too many crores of our population have been on subsistence standard in the years before the War. Apart from the human aspect, important as it undoubtedly is, there was the undoubted fact that such standards stood in the way of increasing India's economic potential and also exercised a depressing influence on labour standards generally. If—and it is a big "If"—we can rapidly industrialise, before the pressure of increasing population coupled with stoppage of our natural outlets for emigration such as Ceylon, Malaya and Burma begins once more to exercise a depressing influence, we will be assured of progress for workers and the country generally beyond the dreams of most people. But all must play their part—workers, employers, governments. Failure of any one section will have disastrous consequences. If this savours of "preaching" or of pushing the interests of industrialists, I can only say that I consider workers' and employers' interests, certainly in the long run, are one.

SECTION III
LABOUR CONDITIONS

A CROSS SECTION

Contributors

K. G. Sivaswamy
Dr. A. M. Lorenzo
Jaipal Singh
Prof. K. C. Ramkrishnan
Dr. Miss Katayun H. Cama
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THIRTY-SIX MILLION

NEAR-SLAVES

SERF LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

K. G. SIVASWAMY

Servants of India Society, Madras

“Free India will be on trial as long as these serfs are unfree”, Shri K. G. Sivaswamy says and he is just right. There are, on a rough reckoning, a thirty-six millions of them which is almost ten per cent of the total population in various stages of near-slavery, living their lives and eating their hearts out in more or less uncomplaining silence, tied and bound to their masters for good and all, de-humanised by generations of forced servility, under-paid, neglected and practically left untouched by liberalising forces of modern civilisation. Among free India's problems this is perhaps the biggest as it pertains to the very foundation of our social structure—agriculture. Public opinion

must lead law, and law and more conscious public opinion must array their combined forces and storm the many fortresses of serfdom, wherever they are to be found.

AS AGRICULTURE is mainly a subsistence economy in India, few permanent labourers are engaged by land-holders and, consequently, disturbances in the wage structure have not occurred so noticeably as in organised industries. Further, in spite of the operation of modern economic forces as communications, circulation of money, international trade, and the free movement of labour, feudal conditions of service have continued even till today in agriculture in some regions. This is due to the existence of ignorant and backward communities, and the accession of aboriginal tribes into the settled life of villages. When the British came, the field labourers were frankly slaves. Slavery was abolished a century ago but its remnants exist, particularly among the descendents of communities doing agricultural labour work. Agricultural labour, which is tied to the land-holder from generation to generation, goes by different names in different areas. *Adiammars* in Travancore, *Cherumas* in Malabar, *Holayas* in South Kanara, *Pannayals* of Tamil-land, *Palerus* in Andhra districts, the *Baghelas* in Hyderabad, the *Haliyas* of Orissa, and the *Dublas* of Gujarat are the various names by which they are called.

**Not the Four
Freedoms but
the Many
Fears**

The main features of service of these classes of permanent servants are the following: The farm servant and his wife should make themselves available for agricultural and domestic services for their master whenever required. Otherwise they may do outside work. The subjection of the farm servant to the master is the consequence of certain special privileges he enjoys. He stays on the house-site of his employer. He is given a piece of land for raising his own crops, or grain equivalent to the yield of this land, at the harvest, the present value of which would be about Rs. 10. He borrows small loans, particularly loans for the celebration of marriages, from his master. A portion of his wage is deferred for payment till the harvest. When it is a proportion of the gross yield, naturally enough, this wage varies with the yield. Even though the hereditary farm servant, tied to the land and transferred with the land to every buyer of lands, has almost disappeared, these privileges have created a new serf. Fear of eviction from the house-site, fear of recall of loans, fear of loss of the additional income from the

piece of land gifted to him, and, lastly, the security taken from a farm servant in the form of deferred wages to be paid only at the harvest are more powerful and terrible sanctions than what the ordinary law may provide for binding a labourer to an employer.

The whole family works for the master in some shape or other

These farm servants are paid a lower wage (working to about 5 annas) than independent labourers in lieu of the assured work they get and the special privileges. They are fed and maintained in certain interior areas while they are given a mid-day rice meal or a rice gruel in certain other areas. Recently, procurement of food grains by Government and the high price of paddy have resulted in the replacement of grain by cash wage and a reduction in the supply of cooked food as wages. These servants are given gifts of cash, grains and clothes, on occasions of marriage, and festivals and also for child birth and funerals. Various customary payments are made to them which go in the Tamil country by the names of *Munvai* (certain sheaves of paddy before threshing commences), *Thaladi* (certain sheaves at the time of threshing), and *Poradi* (certain sheaves at the close of threshing). The remnants of low quality grain left on the threshing floor or in the straw are their perquisites. It should be noted that the wife of the farm servant, too, is bound to work for a lower wage than is current in the area. In some places, it is a condition of the free grant of a piece of land for cultivation that the labourer should hand over his son as a permanent worker for the farm. The children of farm servants also work on their masters' farm, generally as cowherds.

Wages have remained unaffected by War and Post-war rises

In spite of the increase in prices during and after the war there has not been any marked change in the payment of wages to permanent farm servants though the wages of the independent labourer have shot up, double and even treble. $1\frac{1}{2}$ Madras measures (36.57 oz : 1 MM struck) of paddy was the daily wage in 1915 in Tanjore district. The same wage prevails today in many villages other than those where Kisan Associations have agitated for better wages and got 2 Madras measures of paddy a day ($6\frac{1}{2}$ annas). In South Kanara, the daily wage according to the *South Kanara Manual* for a man in 1849 was $1\frac{1}{2}$ seers of rice and condiments. The present wage in many areas is 2 seers of rice (4 lbs ; 9 as). It should

be noted too that the measure used for paying the grain-wages is less in volume than the standard measure by about one-eighth and goes by different names in different parts of the country, as *Balla* in South Kanara, *Pattapara* in Kerala and *Kurruttu marakkal* in the district of Tinnevely. While thus the old traditional grain-wage continues, there is no law to compel the land-holders to give work and thus maintain their permanent farm servants all through the year. The law also does not compel the payment of the various supplementaries as gifts of money and grain on all special and festive occasions, and of clothing and housing materials etc.

**They are no
better than
Serfs**

While this is the economic status of farm servants in canal and delta areas, their position in dry areas, subject to scarcity of rainfall, is far worse. The *Madigas* of Coimbatore district, who repair leather buckets, do not get now-a-days the morning rice-food which they used to get before the war. The *Boyars* and *Bedars* working on farms of *Reddi* owners in Anatapur district sometimes abscond from service to escape the exacting and relief-less toil demanded of them by their masters. In Alur and Adoni taluqs of Bellary district, the indebted *Madigas* are no better than serfs under *Reddi* owners of lands. Generally these labourers are supplied with food of low quality grain.

The aboriginal tribes who work in the plains or whose lands have been appropriated by non-aboriginals have generally contributed to the growth of a class of sweated agricultural labour in their areas. The early land policy of the British Government of imposing a class of Zamindars from non-aboriginals, with superior land rights, depressed the original aboriginal owners to the status of tenants. Also, when even the better class of agricultural communities were forced to borrow in years of scarcity and lost their lands to money-lenders owing to exorbitant rates of interest they had to pay, it was no wonder that the self-sufficient aboriginals, ill-equipped for a money and trade economy easily succumbed to the machinations and intrigues of non-aboriginal land-holders and traders, lost their lands, and became labourers too. These landholders-cum-traders penetrated into interior uplands and jungles and purchased lands. This was the second cause of dispossession of the aboriginals from their lands. The number of aboriginal labourers

increased owing to these reasons. Some of them also settled in the neighbouring plains as 'tied' serfs of land-holders.

The *Paniyans* of Malabar, the *Mariva Gonds* of Bastar, the *Gonds* of Central Provinces, the *Korkus* of the Satpura plateau, the *Kols* and *Oraons* of Chota Nagpur, the *Konds* of Orissa, the *Santals* who, have settled in Bhadrak and Balasore divisions, the *Chenchus* and *Hill Reddis* of Hyderabad are some of the examples of cultivating labourers belonging to the aboriginal class who are commended for their uncomplaining servility and contentment with a low wage! Some of them are engaged as watchmen in gardens and fields as the *Yenadis* of Nellore and the *Bhils* of Khandesh.

**Marriages
and Bonded
service—
Bonded and
Bound**

Another class of serfs who are tied to their land-holders has grown out of the need of agricultural labourers for money in connection with their marriages. A father pledges the service of his son in lieu of the loan granted by a land-holder for the expenses of marriage and the interest due on it. A bond is entered into according to which the debtor-labourer agrees to serve as 'tied' farm servant in accordance with the custom of the village. These bonds for service are more to be found among the descendants of agricultural-labour communities who were frankly slaves at the beginning of the last century. As the law is against the enforcement of bonded service agreements, the latter are now few and far between. Anyway, they exist. We will illustrate by referring to a sample bond. "It is hereby agreed that in lieu of payment of interest on the sum of Rs. 26/- number 2 of ourselves will serve as *Padiyal* (tied servant). In the absence of number 2, number 1 will discharge that duty without fail. In the absence of both, the person standing surety shall produce them before the land-holder". In case of refusal to work they shall be liable to punishment under Act 13, of 1859 (Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, which, however, was repealed in 1925.)¹ In South Kanara, the tied servants are classified as they existed some years back into two kinds, *Moolada Holayas* (Farm Slaves) and *Shalada Holayas* (Farm Slaves by Debt). The latter class of farm servants were paid a supplemental cash wage so that interest on the debt might be set off. In Orissa, the system

¹ See *Some South Indian Villages*, University of Madras, 1940, Page 191.

of bonded service goes by the name of *Gothi*. In Bihar it is called *Kamiauti*. "It prevails both among aboriginals and agricultural labourers in the plains. *Kamias* are bound servants of their masters. In return for a loan received they bind themselves to perform whatever menial services are required of them in lieu of the interest due on the loan. In practice, the system leads to absolute degradation of *Kamias*". In Hyderabad, these bonds go by the name of *Bhagela Agreement*. 'Tied' service in consequence of indebtedness is also common among the aboriginals though there may exist no bond to this effect. Bonded service is common among the *Maria Gonds* of Bastar. About the *Bharias* of the Central Provinces it is said that "if you pay for their marriage they are your bond slaves for ever". Many among the *Bhils* and the *Gonds* are practically serfs owing to their indebtedness to their land-holders. There is a system of selling the *Hill Reddi* labourers in Hyderabad among the contractors of forest produce.

Serfdom under Money- lenders and Traders

Agricultural servitude has also grown in recent times out of the credit needs of agricultural tenants and labour. The bond for marriage expenses was not the sole reason for the growth of conditions of serfdom. Till recently money was scarce. And what money surpluses there are in rural areas are held by landowners. Legislation in provinces like Madras has not controlled usurious and small loans borrowed by the poorer classes. When agricultural labour does not get work, it lives by borrowing grains at rates of interest ranging between 50 and 100 per cent. One unit of grain should be returned as $1\frac{1}{2}$ or $1\frac{1}{4}$ units at the next harvest. Agricultural labour also borrows food articles, condiments and spices from small grocers on promise of returning their value in kind from the grains or commercial produce which they would get at the harvest. Some small traders hawk men's and women's clothes during Diwali and other festival occasions on credit and realise $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the price at the harvest. Agricultural labour is also indebted to these land-holders, who supply them, during seasons of unemployment, with grain and cash loans. The rate of interest is very high on loans to landless classes as they have no security to offer by way of immovable property, and as risks in lending are great in their case owing to their under-employment, the drink habit, and the insecurity of land incomes. Many unscrupulous and sharp practices are adopted by money-lenders

with impunity as the agricultural labourer is ignorant of accounting. Recurring needs of credit demoralise him and develops a mental make-up of servility, ever ready to propitiate the master, by his serviceability, thinking less of honour and more of bread. He supplies head-loads of fuel, and does odd jobs for his master as cart driving, domestic service, messenger service etc. For this class of people the traditional notion that all loans whether incurred by their parents or themselves must be repaid, is the powerful sanction for the various types of exactions practised by land-holders.

Domination of Caste- leadership

There is another form of servitude in all credit and trade transactions. Due to ignorance, the labourers are generally under the domination of their traditional caste leaders. It is the latter that recommend them to the landowners for employment, to the money-lenders for credit, and to the traders for supply. The agricultural labourer is so much bound to his caste leaders that he has to pay in some regions some commission to them for their good offices. Besides he is so much regimented by them that he cannot act of his own volition in many matters of daily life.

You find Quislings here, too

Another form of servitude is due to the finding of employment for agricultural labour by their caste leaders. Sometimes the whole group goes to plantations for work under a head cooly called *Kangani*. The latter dominates their life so much that they have little freedom to act by themselves as against the *Kangani*. Sometimes they owe their employment to their caste leaders who undertake contract work for the harvest, for sowing, and for transplanting from land-holders in distant areas. Ignorance and timidity lead these labourers to give unquestioning obedience to their caste leaders. The latter sometimes become quislings acting on behalf of land-holders or money-lenders or traders or employers of labour, helping them in their unholy profiteering and thinking only of their own gains from the various vested interests. Such quislings are also found among the aboriginals who are the merchants' agents and informers.

The Share- cropper and the Tenant- at-will

Closely akin to permanent farm service is another form of it which provides a little more freedom of movement for the labourer but is not devoid of the elements of serfdom. These labourers are paid a small portion of the crop at each

harvest, who, thus, become co-sharers in the losses in cultivation along with the owner. They may be designated as sharecroppers. The attraction for this service is the assurance of work between one crop and another which, however, a day labourer can hardly hope to have. The return for this assured work is nothing more than a sweated wage which too is variable with yields. It is greater when the worker meets part or whole of the cultivation expenses and dwindles to five per cent of the yield when labour alone is supplied by him. Where serf labour has long existed in the river deltas, this class of servants are paid as low as one-fourth of the yield while they have to find everything for cultivation, while in newly irrigated areas they get between one-third and one-half. Where cattle, seeds, manures, and cash for payment of extra labour are advanced by the land-holder the system of sharing leaves no more than the wage of a farm servant, with the added disadvantage of a variable wage in proportion to yields. Some land-holders have improved on the crop-share system to their advantage by entering into a lease agreement and so fixing the lease amount as to leave only a share which will be no more than the wage of a permanent farm servant. This lease-holder may borrow most of the resources for cultivation from his land-holder. His higher status as a lessee only weighs as a mill-stone round his neck as he has to pay the rent even in years of reduced yields by borrowing or selling his other assets. The large body of rack-rented tenants-at-will form this class of lessees who go by the name of *Verumpattom* in Malabar, *Chalgani* in Kanara etc. A grabbing practice in crop-share followed by land-holders-cum-money-lenders is noteworthy. They advance seeds, food grains and stock, and levy a usurious rate of interest for these advances which gives them a far greater profit than agriculture. This happens in Wynad (Malabar) where the aboriginal cultivators are paid a crop-share according to yield, after deducting interest and goes by the name of *Muricha-krishi*. Where labour alone is supplied by a crop-share tenant, it goes by the name of *Peru* in Tinnevely, *Kaiyerpallan* in Trichinopoly, and *Bhagin* in Berar and Hyderabad. Where the tenant supplies labour and bullocks and meets whole or part of expenses on seed and manure, it goes by the name of *Varam*, *Palu*, *Batai* and *Bagh*, in the different provinces of India. Where the share is very low, it is mainly the resourceless and less

capable labourers belonging to the communities of untouchables, aboriginals, cow-herds, hunters, watchers etc., who generally contract for this kind of tenure.

A servile tenure

Certain features indicating a servile tenure are noticeable in all these forms of tenancy. The produce will be watched at the time of the harvest and at the threshing floor by the land-holder. The tenant will be making his main income from precarious sources as hay, a second crop of grams, or grass on the bunds etc. He is also given a small piece of land or some extra grain at harvest in return for personal services to the land-holder. His share of the crop will be measured by a measure smaller than that used for measuring the share of the land-holder!

Feudal Levies and Forced Labour

Feudal levies and unpaid service demanded of these tenants are all expressions of conditions of serfdom. In Kanara, they contribute free labour in proportion to the area leased to them. It is two days of free labour and one day of free service of a pair of bullocks for one *murs* of and i.e, two-fifths of an acre. In addition, a tenant supplies one head load of vegetables to Hindu land-holders, and ghee and fowls in the case of Muslim land-holders. In North Kanara, the free supply of bullock carts during Diwali and special festivals by tenants to their land-holders for visiting the houses of their relations in distant villages is quite a common occurrence. In Malabar, little forced labour is exacted from tenants but there are some feudal levies as *vasi* (allowance for dryage) *muri* (handful of paddy denoting measurements) and contributions in kind to land-holders and temples on festival days. All these dues and services are specified in the lease deed and are resented as marks of serfdom by self-respecting tenants and valued as symbols of prestige by conservative land-holders.

Land Rent in the form of Manual Labour

Certain compulsory manual services are also enjoined on tenants in several parts of the province of Madras. These relate to the digging and clearance of irrigation canals in the summer, and the erection of *pandals* (sheds) during temple festivals or ceremonies in the houses of the land-holders. In return for these services, the tenants are paid a smaller than the current wage according to the custom of the village with an occasional addition of a free meal, or no wage at all. Dr. S. S. Nehru refers in his book *Caste and Credit* to a

lower rent in the United Provinces fixed for low-caste tenants called by the name of *Razil*, in lieu of unpaid labour, or labour at a lower remuneration than the market rates of wages. He calls this labour as 'labour rent' i. e. rent paid by tenants for lands in the form of manual labour to land-holders. In Chattisgarh *Chamar* tenants render similar service to their land-holders.¹

Levies in Zamindaris

Levies in the form of (a) perquisites, (b) free labour, and (c) contributions to village Gods, and village artisans, watchmen and other servants helping in agriculture are equally common in the Zamindari areas of the province of Madras. Unpaid labour is more common in Zamindaris adjoining forests and remote from roads and railways. Construction of roads and repairs to irrigation works falls on the ryots in these Zamindaris.²

Levies from Aboriginal Tenants and Labourers

Forced levies and unpaid services take various forms in aboriginal areas. In *Tribal Hyderabad 1945* a number of exactions from *Gonds* are referred to. It is common in Orissa and Bihar to exact forced labour for construction of road and Government houses in the place of taxes from the aboriginals. Mr. Grigson refers to various forms of forced labour and collection of poll tax by non-aboriginal Malguzars from aboriginals in Mandla district (C.P.). Mr. Symington refers in his report of 1940 about the cruelties inflicted by land-holders in the Bombay Province on aboriginals in exacting forced labour.

Serfdom and Menial tasks of Village Servants

Certain forms of servitude are relics of the old village community life. Compulsory services of certain communities rendered firstly, to the villagers, secondly, to the village officers in respect of village administration, and, thirdly, to government servants during their tours have persisted and lingered on till today. Some of these services being menial tasks, a despised status attaches to the communities who perform them. The 'Mahars' in the province of Bombay have to perform all kinds of menial services for Government servants. They have to remove dead animals from villages and clean all refuse in the village. They are at the beck and call of village officers. In many provinces not only the

¹ *The Aboriginals 'so-called'*, by G. S. Ghurye P. 220.

² (The reader may refer to the booklet issued by the writer on *Feudal and Extra Levies in Zamindari Areas* for more details.)

village officer and his relations but all land-holders demand the skin of dead animals from the *Mahars*, which is resented by them as these skins are a substantial source of livelihood to them. In the state of Cochin, some landowners demand also a portion of the flesh of dead animals. The *Mahars* remove human corpses, too, in different parts of India. Many have forsaken their hereditary occupations and migrated to towns. Owing to an awakening among them, due to the impact of new ideas, they refuse, today, to render free services and demand a fair wage. The *Chamars* are another community who have to do certain types of manual labour for the Government and the land-lord in the United Provinces, for which they receive certain privileges related to the land. They are paid at the harvest a share of the produce for supplying well water-bags, leather straps, and whips, for cultivation under wells, almost in all provinces. They are constantly harassed by demands of all kinds in the United Provinces. In the northern districts of the Central Provinces they are perhaps the most debased class of the community confined to the lowest of menial tasks, and their spirit broken by generations of servitude, the vast majority despised and bullied helots.

Ameliorative Measures

This narrative of the forms of agricultural servitude in India should not be taken to mean that they exist among all the members of the backward communities and in all the areas. They are breaking down in proportion to the mass and individual awakening among them, the impact of civilising influences, as new avenues of industrial employment in urban areas, communications, and emigration, and the spread of education and social reform. Various provincial governments and States are tackling the problems through legislation, administrative vigilance and a larger budget expenditure to finance social welfare. Legislation controlling money-lending, land-rents, and sale of lands to non-agriculturists and non-aboriginals has been undertaken in many areas. The Co-operative method has been used to a greater degree than before. Special protection has been offered in the forests to agriculturists and aboriginals as against merchants and contractors. Certain concessions regarding free use of forest produce for domestic and agricultural purposes have been granted to them. Experience has shown that controls against vested interests are more or less ineffectual, so much

so Mr. W. V. Grigson proposes the abolition of malguzari land-holders in the aboriginal areas of Central Provinces. The co-operative system, super-imposed by the State, naturally enough, does not work in socially backward communities. The line of approach lies in the initiation of State services, similar to the farm security administration in the United States of America.

**Political
Domination
of Vested
Interests**

The outlook of society at large should change towards these problems. The classes, classified as untouchables, the aboriginals, and some of the backward communities who are, today, engaged in rural labour work of all kinds and do certain menial tasks in villages are suspicious of the middle class. The exploiting land-holders and traders are in power in all local bodies, and represented in government services. Public opinion is hardly conscious of the prevalence of this near slavery.

**Estimated
Population
under Condi-
tions of
Serfdom**

We will conclude this note with an estimate of the extent of the population affected by agricultural servitude in various forms. The scheduled castes form a population of 49 millions, 40 millions in the British Provinces, and 9 millions in the States. It will be an under-estimate if we said that no less than a third or 17 millions are agricultural serfs. The tribal population is 25 millions, 17 millions in the provinces, and 8 millions in the States. Not less than three-fourths i.e. 19 millions are forced to live in conditions of serfdom. The scheduled castes and the aboriginal tribes are the two vulnerable sources from which this type of exploited labour is drawn. The total population which lives in the unrelieved darkness of the near-slavery I have described is above 36 millions or about ten percent of the population of India. *Free India will be on trial as long as these serfs remain unfree.*

AGRESTIC SERFDOM

A TALE OF EXPLOITATION

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Dr. A. M. Lorenzo's contribution is the counter-part of Shri Sivaswamy's for the North of India and completes the picture. It is a scholarly presentation, coming as it does, from a University don.

Dr. Lorenzo places the figure of the denizens of this sub-human sector of our country at 50 millions to Sri Sivaswamy's 36. That is the magnitude and the range of the problem and it is not yet realised it is so big—a festering sore on the Nation's side. There is a multitudinous variety of these serfs, exploited with impunity, life-sentenced almost to eternal semi-servitude, mentally stunted, a fateful sense of inferiority injected into them by years of unashamed oppression

and bullying—slaves behind the plough, who do not get even a hundredth of the deal that the rattle on the other side of the plough get. If the dogged continuance of this type of helotry is the result of the samindari system and absentee land-lordism, the remedy is obvious.

THE SYSTEM of personal servitude is a picturesque relic of the past. Though the history of the development of village communities in Northern India does not throw sufficient light on the origin and growth of agrestic serfdom there is ample evidence that this pernicious custom is not exotic to India. As a trait of culture, agrestic serfdom is a creation of environmental pressure, and must be attributed a parallel growth in different regions of the earth; and though it manifests itself in multifarious forms, at different times and in different places, it shrinks in essence to a simple economic product of the geographical environment. Whenever a transition in economic stages is forced by the pressure of physical environment—soil, climate, fauna and flora—new economic institutions evolve themselves and gradually merge into the social structure, thus making adaptation quicker and easier. The agrarian history of India shows that agrestic serfdom is a socio-economic institution, evolved out of an imperious economic necessity in a closed system of village economy.

**Historical
Origin of
Bond-labour
as a Socio-
economic
Institution**

Agrestic serfdom is not a primitive institution, and therefore, it cannot be traced back to the Collectional Economic Satge. It is essentially an industrial institution of late growth. In the pastoral stage, particularly, where the peripatetic tribes became comparatively more localized by practising meadow-husbandry, agrestic serfdom had gained good ground; whilst in the more settled economic stages of village settlement, where agriculture became the principal source of subsistence and other primitive occupations subservient to cultivation, serfdom had come to stay. Where agriculture is practised with crude implements and without the aid of domestic animals, where the working population is scarce, where the land must be reclaimed from the wilds and marshes, and where soil and climate act as limiting factors for the employment of imported labour—it is not capital that is wanted, but native labour to reclaim the land and cultivate it under difficult environmental conditions. Under these circumstances bond-labour of the native population is introduced and pinned to the soil in conditions akin to slavery and serfdom.

The institution of slavery in India, with special reference to agricultural slaves, seems to have been established in very remote times, and is linked up with the idea of innate dependence of Sudras and their perpetual slavery as one of the axioms or Brahmanism; because the Sudra issued from the feet of Purusa, the primeval male (feet denoting service). Thus the original slaves were called *Dasas* or *Sevaks*, terms which signify eternal social and economic dependence, and the existence of *Dasas* was considered a liability redeemable only by service.

As an established social institution slave labour was a conspicuous feature in ancient India. The Law Book of Narada enumerated fifteen different varieties of them. The *Kutumbins*, who cultivated land as a subsidiary means of livelihood, were understood by Kielhorn to be only serfs. Similarly, the *Upavasas*, who formed the bulk of the landless class, flourished in an aggressive state of serfdom. Kautalya gave it his Sanction as the lawful privilege of Government servants and the land-owning classes. The number of slaves was increased from time to time when the villagers captured in a war as agricultural slaves or by addition of persons who sold themselves to landlords during famines, and to money-lenders for relieving themselves from the burden of cumulative debts.

**It was there
long before
British
occupation**

The nature and extent of agricultural slavery in Northern India cannot be estimated beyond the middle of the 18th century A.D. from the meagre data available. Traces, however, of agricultural slavery appear in the history of the occupation and development of the Chota Nagpur plateau by hordes of immigrants from the Ganges and Mahanadi valleys. The Munda chiefs were the first and original reclaimers of the soil, but were subjugated by the Oraons in the 10th century A.D. After about two hundred years the Oraons were crushed by Cheros and Kharwars who exercised dominion from Ranchi to Allahabad. In the 13th century A.D., however, the first influx of Banias began from Bihar, the U.P. and Central India and, by a systematic policy of money-lending, these Dikkus (immigrant Mahajans) had assumed supremacy over large stretches of land and become jagirdars. With the increase of Hindu Jagirdars there grew a competition for raiyats, and the system of bond-labour was inevitably introduced. Agricultural slavery was,

therefore, established long before the British occupation of the Chota Nagpur territories.

From the proceedings of the Council of Revenue dated 17th May, 1774, we learn that vending of persons as slaves to land-holders was abolished in Bhagalpur district of Bihar. Early in 1739 the Collector of Shahabad wrote to Lord Cornwallis requesting speedy instructions as to the manner in which he should determine cases of agricultural and domestic slaves. In 1790 forced Santal labour was freely used in Birbhum to clear jungles and reclaim land for cultivation, and according to Southern land (1818) and Dunbar (1836) the Ghatwals and Dikkus had completely enslaved the aboriginal population of Santal Parganas, and the Santal insurrection, which broke out in 1854, was due to the oppression of usurers who had systematically reduced the Santals to poverty and slavery. In 1800 it was observed by several travellers that the condition of the indebted and landless agricultural labourers in Cooch Behar was akin to *Villain Francs* and *Sokemen* of the French and English manorial villages. In 1808 Dr. Buchanan Hamilton made a minute survey of some of the districts of Bihar and concluded that agricultural slavery was a common feature of the rural economy of these regions, as is also evident from the answers of the Muftis and Pundits to the questions put by the Nizamati-i-Adalat in 1809.

**Some Reports
and Surveys
reveal the
Story**

In 1859 the "Statement Showing the Material and Moral Progress of India" showed that agricultural slavery still prevailed in the Chota Nagpur plateau, the Ganges and Brahmaputra valleys, and the sub-Himalayan regions. From the classification of bond-slaves made by professor Wilson (1865) and Sir W. Hunter (1872) we find that the system was introduced by moneyed Hindu settlers. It was organised primarily for performing various agricultural and domestic duties. In 1886, the Jesuit Missionaries, after converting them to Christianity, liberated many slaves from the clutches of their masters. The report of the Bailey Conference with Christian Missionaries and landlords in 1890 brought to light the universal practice of *Kamiauti* (bond-labour) in northern India.

The first systematic survey was made by Sifton in 1908, who observed that agricultural slavery was extending in all

parts of Chota Nagpur, and in 1913 Bridges reported that almost the entire aboriginal population of Bihar had been enslaved by non-cultivating land-lords. In 1930 Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee, during an unofficial investigation, found that many villages of Ranchi, Hazaribagh and Pallamau were populated only by landless serfs. The Government of Bihar in 1934 deputed Mr. Chowdhuri for an official enquiry into the nature and extent of *Kamiauti* and bond-labour in the province, but the report was not made public. Our systematic investigations from 1933 to 1940, however, have brought to light several important points, *first*, that agricultural slavery in its original form does not exist anymore, but appears in milder forms of 'serfdom' and *begar*; *Second*, that newly reclaimed forest lands and unhealthy submontane tracts are hotbeds for agrestic serfdom; *third*, that the system, though considerably now weakened, is not completely suppressed and likely to persist until the bogie of absentee land-lordism and non-cultivating owners is removed by drastic legislation.

**Not Slaves
but
near-Slaves**

A distinction, however, might be drawn between slavery and serfdom. Slavery is the subjection of men individually, and a subjection which includes the whole personality of the slave. The master of the slave is entitled to all the services of the slave, including his personality or his very existence, which makes him a living chattel. Serfdom, on the other hand is the subjection of men individually or collectively for rendering services to the master in lieu of some obligation. The slave owner may do with his slave whatever he is not by special laws forbidden to do; the master of a serf may require from his men such services or tributes only as the law allows him to require.

Serfdom in India is characteristically a group status where custom still mainly controls status and tenure. The depressed and exterior castes are supposed to be degraded and despised and their members are in collective subjection to the members of higher castes. The fate of many caste-groups, whether due to poverty, low birth, or the nature of occupation, is sealed by forces of socio-economic nature which are often beyond their control. Serfdom in India, therefore, does not amount to personal servitude. It is usufruct-servitude with a right to enjoy a thing, the

property of which is vested in another, and to take its fruits, but not to destroy or fundamentally to alter its substance. While it extends for life, the usufruct right might be created for a fixed term, or it may be terminated by the death of the holder.

Edge blunted
a bit

Serfdom, therefore, will be used in the following pages to designate, *first*, a group subjection; and *second*, a usufruct personal servitude. No doubt, under bad masters, it has assumed the form of primitive slavery and involved the entire personality of the serf, but recent legislation in all parts of India against slave-labour has brought this institution into a stage of further transition. Thus we have passed from slavery to serfdom, and now to *Begar*, which is simply a seasonal servitude justified both by custom and law. This transition was forced by pressure of changing custom due to cultural penetration and diffusion, the opening up of dark regions and a more effective political administration. Wherever the status of the peasant proprietor has been encroached upon by high-caste money-lenders, who have broken through the weak system of tenancy and usurped the land of poorer classes, the farm-hand verges on serfdom like that of the *Chakar* in Bengal, the *Baramasiya* in North Bihar, the *Kamia* in Chota Nagpur, the *Muliya* in Orissa, the *Sewak* in the U.P., the *Hurwahee* in Central India, the *Cheora* in Kumaon, the *Shalkari* in the C.P., the *Halia* in Gujrat, the *Dubla* in Bombay, and the *Padial* in Madras.

Look at this
Serf and that!

Agrestic Serfdom, as a social liability to land-lords, by virtue of their property ownership, has still a stronghold in certain backward agricultural regions of Northern India, and appears to be an old and hereditary practice. If one travels along the Himalayan base, from the valley of Kashmir to the Brahmaputra basin, a multitudinous variety of serfs will be found associated with the agricultural practices of different regions. Purely physico-environmental rather than social causes are responsible for the consistent prevalence and inertia of agrestic serfdom in these 'dark' regions of the country. The institution, as old as the cultural history of the Aryans, has flourished unimpaired by the vagaries of times and has played an important part in the rural economy of the regions where it has been established. The vestigial

remains of agrestic serfdom, still found under different forms, are briefly described below;—

The Haliyas and Cheoras of Kumaon:— These are household slaves as well as slaves for the cultivation of the land, and are recruited from the *Khasiya* and *Dom* castes respectively. Both these classes of slaves are dependent on their masters for food, shelter and clothing, and an obligation for the discharge of marriage expenses. Slavery in the form of household women slaves (who are also sold for immoral purposes) are not un-common even under strict prohibitory measures. Up to 1840 the name *Haliya* was given to those *Doms* who were employed as ploughmen with their families, and could be sold with the land, that is, title in land also gave title to the slaves cultivating it. The *Cheora*, or the domestic slave could be sold or given away with his family without any reason being assigned. These slaves are almost solely confined to the hill-pattis and to Bhabar regions, and along with many other so-called low castes, such as *Ruriyas*, *Orhs*, *Bhuls*, *Bhairsuwas*, *Agaris* and *Kolis*, constitute the bulk of the agricultural serf population. All these castes represent apparently an aboriginal race and from time immemorial have played the part of serfs to the agricultural land-holding castes of the *Bhotias*, *Khas-Rajputs* and *Bagbans*.

The Sewaks and Hariyas or Oudh: The *Sewak* system is prevalent mostly in the submontane districts of Gonda, Pabraich, Basti, Gorakhpur, Kheri and everywhere east of the Ghagra river, and appears in different forms under modified conditions. The *Tharus*, *Chamars*, *Nats*, *Doms* and *Ghoriyas*, who are generally landless labourers, form the bulk or *Sewak* population. The *Hariya* is a seasonal serf, whereas the *Sewak* is permanent. Both the *Hariya* and the *Sewak* are under a debt bondage, pure and simple. The ordinary sum so given varies from Rs. 20/- to Rs. 100/- according to the needs of the borrower, which, it must be noted, multiplies to an enormous amount due to an exorbitant rate of interest. The *Hariya* can liberate himself any time after paying off his debt, but the bondage of the *Sewak* is hereditary, passing on to his children down to the remotest generation. It is quite common to meet labourers, whose fore-fathers entered into these obligations, and who still labour in their discharge, although well aware that they can discard them and be free to sell their labour in the open

market. The serfs, however, never receive cash, and their grain pittance never exceeds their bare requirements, lest they should repay their debt and be lost to their master. Even when cash wages are received they are never in a position to pay more than the interest during the year.

The Hurwahees and Baramasiyas of North Bihar:—The lowest depth of serfdom is touched by the *Baramasiyas* of Bettiah, Motihari, Darbhanga and Pertabganj in North Bihar, who perform whatever menial services are required of them by their masters. They are purely domestic slaves and their serfdom is hereditary, whereas the *Hurwahees* are bond-servants who work in lieu of the interest due on the loan. The *Baramasiya* is given a small pittance, but allowed a hut and the left-over food from the master's table. The *Hurwahees* often receive cash wages (not exceeding one-third of the daily rate), but on account of their extravagance the cash is utilized in drinks and feasts, and often the labour of women and children is pledged for paltry sums.

The Chakars and Muliyas of Orissa:—The *Muliyas* are evidently the descendants of the forest races by whom the uplands of Orissa were inhabited before the Aryan conquest. At present there are three kinds of *Muliyas*: (a) *Nitmajur*, whose social position is *de-facto* that of a slave. He is a hereditary slave. He gets food and clothing from his master and works as a domestic slave. (b) *Naga*, who is also a slave, but of higher status and works on the field of his master. At harvest time he sleeps on the field to watch over the crops. He seldom receives cash wages, but in addition to the customary grain allowance he gets a strip from his master's land (20-25 decimals) which he cultivates for himself. (c) *Danda*, who is a seasonal serf, hired usually for sowing or harvesting season, and paid in kind.

The Kamias of Chota Nagpur:—The *Kamias* are bond servants of their masters. In return for a loan received, they bind themselves and often their generations, to perform whatever menial services are required of them in lieu of the interest due on the loan. Such loans are usually borrowed at times of economic distress or social necessity. It is usually the poor labourers and low caste agriculturists who are victimised by those rich and high cast ryots and land-lords who do not care to do the actual cultivation themselves. In

Chota Nagpur, owing to the presence of a large aboriginal and depressed caste population, the *Kamia* system has become a common feature of rural economy. The term *Kamia* stands for the four-fold characteristics of an agricultural labourer: -

- (a) A field worker whose labour is exacted by force.
- (b) A working client of the mahajan-cum-landlord master.
- (c) A farm hand whose duties are varied and many, and without whom the *Sir* land of the landlord may lie uncultivated.
- (d) A sweated class of worker, underfed and mentally stunted, and regarded by their masters as little better than human chattel.

The *Kamia* is too valuable to be ill-treated, and his master always anxiously looks after his health and welfare, and provides him with at least the bare necessities of life. The chief diet of the *Kamia* consists of coarse rice and dal. His wife and children also get clothes and a free house attached to a *makan-bari* plot. The *Kamia* never has any money, and the restrictions imposed on his movement render him not better than a slave. An absconding *Kamia* can hardly find asylum anywhere in the district, because the landlords, as a class, combined to maintain the system and return to his master any *Kamia* taking shelter in their village. A *Kamiauti* bond, therefore, involves a life sentence. Many *Kamias* have, however, run away to the mining centres at Giridih and Kodarma and liberated themselves from their cruel and unsympathetic masters. The *Kamia* population comprises of the semi-primitive tribes, such as the *Mundas*, *Orans*, *Bhuiyas*, *Dusadhs*, *Kols*, *Santals*, *Ghatwars*, and a large number of other aboriginal castes. Big zamindars command a large number of *Kamias* because their prestige is measured by the number of their retinue. The social position, befitting zamindars, cannot be maintained by many of the small zamindars if the *Kamia* system is suppressed and serfdom abolished.

The Why and the Wherefore of it

Agrestic serfdom is most commonly associated with conditions of socio-economic nature. These conditions are not peculiar to certain backward provinces of Northern India.

but are characteristic of all regions where the agricultural population has been dissociated from modern social and economic changes in the country. A systematic and detailed study of this time-honoured institution in India leads us to the following conclusions :—

(a) Agrestic serfdom is a common feature of those places where the low castes and depressed orders are most numerous. The ethnic composition of the village greatly determines the social and economic status of the people and is responsible for the survival of these conditions. Whether in the capacity of the slave, a serf or a *begar*, at present more than fifty million persons in India suffer both socially and economically on account of the stigma of untouchability attached to them. In Bihar and Orissa, about one-sixth of the total population (i. e. 8 million) belongs to 24 pure aboriginal and 17 semi-aboriginal tribes. Besides these, more than 7 million belong to the depressed classes. Roughly speaking one-third of the total population of Bihar and Orissa is composed of semi-serf, depressed and exterior castes. In Chota Nagpur this class accounts for 65 and 85 per cent of total population. The *Kamia* population is composed of those aboriginal tribes and depressed castes which are lazy and careless, and are content with a dole of food and a house to live in and, so long as these are not denied, consider it an honour to relish the crumbs from their masters' tables.

(b) Serfdom is an evil of the Zamindari system. In districts where there is landlord tenancy over big estates, and Zamindari is under the *Brahmins, Thakurs, Rajputs, Pathans* and other high castes, the system has gathered enormous strength. Wherever the original population was subdued by foreign immigrants, who, though financially powerful, were unable to cultivate the land themselves on account of the natural conditions of soil and water supply, a regular supply of labour became imperative for the cultivation of the landlord's *Sir* land and to assist the agents of an absentee landlord.

(c) Serfdom is almost entirely associated with indebtedness. The mahajan has always exploited the miserable plight of the poor peasantry and reduced them to eternal serfdom. Since the *Kamia* population is composed of

migratory tribes, in whose hands neither the principal debt is secure nor a guarantee of regular labour supply obtainable, they have to be pinned to the estate and their wanderlust broken.

The existence of the *Kamia* system is both a social and an economic menace and, in these days of considerable freedom, widened economic outlook, social upheaval, and a strong Central Government, it tells on the whole social and administrative machinery of a progressive country. Though social and legislative measures are being taken to eradicate this evil, yet a more vigorous and determined move is required to abolish an old custom that preys upon the very life of the man behind the plough.

**They did not
do enough**

Under British Rule slavery was not abolished at once, but only gradually. The existence of the institution of slavery in the latter half of the 18th century was brought to light by Jesuit Missionaries in Chota Nagpur. These missionaries took an active interest in the temporal interests of their converts, and lent a sympathetic ear to the complaints of the aborigines about the heavy load of praedial services and the cruelties and injustices to which they were subjected in the capacity of slaves. In 1774 legal measures were taken in the Bhagalpur District (Bihar), and 1789 Lord Cornwallis despatched instructions to the collector of Shahabad as to the manner in which he should determine cases of slavery.

On the basis of the Minute of Sir Buchanan, more effective measures were taken in the Government of India's Regulation X of 1811, prohibiting the importation of slaves from foreign countries into the British territories. This rule was, by Regulation III of 1832, extended to the Provinces which subsequently came into the possession of the British Government. Later on, Act V of 1843 prohibited all Government officers from recognizing slavery, and it was finally abolished in 1860 by the I.P.C. which declared the equality of all men and provided punishment for buying or selling any person as a slave.

In spite of these legal measures this evil custom continued to flourish in a modified form, known as *Kamianti* (debt-bondage), in remote rural areas of Northern India. In 1920, however, the Government of Bihar and Orissa passed the

"B. & O. Kamiauti Agreement Act VIII of 1920", which declared that such agreements were void, unless (a) the full terms of the agreements were expressed in a stamped document; (b) the *Kamia* was given a copy of this document; (c) the period of the agreement exceeded or could possibly exceed one year; (d) the *Kamia's* liability was completely extinguished on the expiry of the term of the agreement; (e) the *Kamia's* remuneration under the agreement was fair and equitable.

But the Kamiauti Agreements Act of 1920 did not prove effective in suppressing the abuse. The master-landlords proved too elusive in getting round the legal restrictions. Moreover, the Act did not apply to agreements entered into by 'skilled workmen', so that the old *Kamiauti* conditions still applied to labour rendered by such persons as *Chamars*.

**You want
heroic
remedies**

All legal measures have so far proved ineffective to suppress this system of serfdom completely. And thus the matter at present stands. But no legislation can ever become fruitful unless the people for whom it is formulated consciously strive to make the best of it. In this particular case, legislation preceded the economic and social uplift of the serf population, a policy nothing short of putting the cart before the horse. As a temporary measure, when such special legislation is enforced, the Government should provide new lands by reclamation for the discharged serfs in the same vicinity, or provide facilities for emigration to industrial districts. In the case of extension of cultivation, the tenancy of land hitherto uncultivated should be offered to the *Khunt-Kattidar* and not to the holder of adjoining cultivated land, as has been the practice in the past. Otherwise the landless labourers will have no chance of settling down as peasant proprietors.

This way

Legislation, in order to be effective, must cover all the problems directly or indirectly associated with the system of serfdom. There is an urgent need for a new Anti-Kamiauti Act which should be based on the following consideration:

- (a) Almost all forms of agrestic serfdom take their root in indebtedness. When the yoke of the money-lender becomes unbearably heavy, and indebtedness assumes a chronic form, the plight of the derelict farm-hand is nothing short of serfdom. Therefore,

neither the principal debt nor the interest accrued thereon should be repayable in services.

- (b) No landlord should have more *Sir* land than he can cultivate himself with family assistance. (The U.P. Government has now limited the *Sir* to 50 acres).
- (c) All praedial services (*Begar*) and illegal dues (*Rukumats*) should be commuted into cash.
- (d) There should be a strict regulation of the hours and conditions of work.
- (e) The employment of agricultural serfs should be considered a penal offence.

The *Kamias* are gradually emerging from the state of serfdom to that of free labour. But the improvement in their social status is very slow. This is due to their ignorance, improvidence and even disinclination to fight their own battle from fear of worse happenings to them. Whenever they have shown signs of independence, they have been subjected to most inhuman atrocities by their masters—their lands have been taken away, their house and belongings confiscated and their families mercilessly beaten. Moreover, the acquirement of servile dispositions, after generations of toil and sweating, by the serf population, has developed such recessive traits of character in them as cannot be modified by a stroke of the pen. Legislation therefore, cannot immediately be a cure but only act as a palliative. The real cure lies in the improvement of the lot of these wretched classes, the diffusion of elementary education and above all the creation of a strong public opinion by patient toil in the right direction.

**Freedom of
India must
mean their
Freedom**

Viewed in a correct perspective, the problem of agrestic serfdom in India is essentially one of justice and humanity. It requires a complete readjustment of social conditions of the depressed orders of humanity who suffer from numerous disabilities, injustices and cruelties on account of their birth. This state of affairs cannot be defended on grounds of equity or true religion. Indians who are striving for national freedom ought not to deny just treatment to a section of their own countrymen. They must remember that in the struggle for national freedom and social emancipation a country cannot efficiently work in sections.

**A fifty-million
of them Sir !**

At present more than fifty million of the entire population of this country belong to the so-called exterior castes and depressed classes. There can be no denying the fact that most, almost all, of these classes labour are under disabilities only on account of the stigma attached to their castes. These down-trodden classes have developed a deleterious inferiority complex on account of the time-worn custom which has consigned them to their present degraded condition. They have to rest content with whatever little opportunities are allowed them to develop their full stature. Under the circumstances, pinned as they are under the weight of heavy chains of prejudice and age-old usages, their existence acts as a drag on the body politic.

**You are not
free till they
are freed**

The salvation of India as a whole must be preceded by the solution of this grave problem which has of late attracted the attention both of the politician and the reformer. Everywhere, throughout the world, attempts are being made to ameliorate the plight of the poor. The humanitarian efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and the Christian Missionary Institutions in India in the cause of Harijans have been noteworthy. Whatever motives may be attributed to the uplift of the depressed, one fact stands out prominent, namely, that the present national awakening in India is entirely due to the realization of the spirit of freedom amongst the lower strata of society. It would perhaps not be far wrong to say that those who make the allegation that the movement for the uplift of the depressed classes is due to the political motives (e. g. with Mahatma Gandhi), or religious motives (e. g. with Christian Missionaries) are themselves victims of such motives in making this assertion. Whatever may be said, it is the bounden duty of every true Indian to do everything in his or her power to wipe out the stain of untouchability from the country, eschewing every idea of exploiting the miserable plight of these unfortunate human beings for communal or political ends.

ABORIGINES AND LABOUR PROBLEMS

JAIPAL SINGH

Shri Jaipal Singh, in a simple but lucid manner, tells us how on-coming industrialism has disturbed and disintegrated the tribal living of the aborigines, heaving them into the cold unfriendliness of urban centres, destroying their comparatively care-free existence and pitch-forking them into a state of life and work that they do not understand and cannot see the sense of. They fall into the hands of contractors of labour and do not get a chance of doing anything more than low-paid unskilled work. Shri Jaipal Singh is not doubtful of their future as producer citizens of the country but accuses the industrialists of exploiting their innocence and helplessness.



ACCORDING to the 1941 Census, which is far from accurate in tribal enumeration, there are 254 lakhs of aborigines in India and of this 87 lakhs are in the Indian States. At the Indian Science Congress in 1939 it was claimed by our leading anthropologists that aborigines were "not less than 30 millions". I would myself be inclined to say they were about 100 millions. Who are our aborigines? They are the original inhabitants of India; they settled here ages before Arya-speaking people entered this country. Now-a-days a new and beautiful and accurate name has been accepted for our aborigines. They are now called *Adibasis*, the most ancient aristocracy of India.

Adibasis are to be found in every nook and corner of India, but their largest concentrations are in jungle tracts and mountain fastnesses. As newcomers invaded India, *Adibasis* either resisted them or retreated away from them. This explains why the Arya-speaking people predominate to this day along river basins. Jharkhand, the classical name for the Chota Nagpur Plateau, is the largest and most compact area, having a total *Adibasi* population of 51 lakhs. The Central Provinces and Berar have 29 lakhs, Assam 25 lakhs, Bengal 19 lakhs, Orissa 17 lakhs and Bombay 16 lakhs.

**Impact of
Industrialisation
may not
be an unmixed
blessing**

Industrialisation, rationalised, planned or free, extensive or intensive, is going to affect *Adibasis* vitally and, in fact, it will seriously shake and upset their present social, economic and religious foundations. Hitherto, the impact of industrial development has been relatively gentle and, within limitations, considerate and *Adibasis* have been able to adapt themselves by way of a cultural symbiosis in their new environs or have preserved their own way of life by preferring to live in liminal areas safely removed from the violence of strangers and their disintegrating influences. No industrial development can take place without inflicting a revolution in *Adibasidom*.

**Jharkhand
may become
the Industrial
Centre of the
Future**

Jharkhand is an outstanding example of the labour problems facing industrialists and *Adibasis*. Manbhum district supplies most of the coal requirements and the coal-mining population is almost entirely *Adibasi*. Labour in the collieries became scarce through distraction of workers to other

better-paid employment. This difficulty is still afflicting the collieries. Singhbhum is reputed to have the largest deposits in the world of high-grade iron ore; something like 3,000 million tons are there in this one district alone. In it also there is the Indian Copper Corporation at Mosaboni and Moubhandar. In Ranchi district, there are mountains of bauxite and the development of aluminium industries is going to change the face of the area very soon. In this electrical age, mica of Hazaribagh district is bound to continue to play its important role.

One could give a whole inventory of the valuable minerals in Jharkhand where there is every variety of them in magnitude. There can be little doubt that, like the present heavy industries, new heavy industries will have to be situated in *Adibasi* tracts, and in consequence, more labour problems will be created. What is true of Jharkhand is more or less true of other *Adibasi* tracts.

The Adibasi in his own setting

A correct appreciation of *Adibasi* labour problems cannot be had without a proper portrayal of the two different modes of life, one depicting *Adibasis* in their natural surroundings and the other showing them in their changed circumstances of industrialism. Except in areas where considerable absorption processes have worked, *Adibasis* have managed to keep themselves apart, retaining their ancient economy, social customs and privileges and languages. We might almost say they live in a world of their own, governed by their characteristic laws. Subject to the ties and conventions of their tribes, they are masters of the jungles they occupy. They live communally and, generally, own property likewise. They are equally rich and poor. There is no class among them and the tribal chieftain might be any one of the community. There are no parasites among them. Everyone must work in order to live. Where extra hands are taken on as servants, these are no different from other members of the family. Broadly speaking, the amount of land a family holds is the actual quantity it can itself manage and cultivate. Where the endeavour of the whole commune is necessary, it is readily available. All round, there is great freedom and ample leisure and recreation. *Adibasis* have the mountains and jungles for their playground and, in the modern sense, there is an absence of physical restraint. We must not think they have an easy time of it. Indeed, they

have to labour hard during certain seasons of cultivation and harvesting. Outside this hard work, there is plenty of feasting. Dancing plays an important role in tribal life and its solidarity and there is plenty of it.

**They make
the Unskilled
Labour Force**

As against this freedom of the jungle and security of occupation, the picture of the discipline of the factory bell is dismal and cheerless. Exodus to industrial towns straight-away means snapping of age-long ties. *Adibasis* find themselves in strange surroundings with unfriendly people. They have to live where they can. The tribal form of life has to be held in abeyance and a completely foreign authority has to be understood. Conditions of work cannot be picked and chosen; they are there to take or leave. Hours of work are compact and fixed and none must depart from them. Holidays are few and far between and, for *Adibasis*, their employers know no festivals. There is little hope of getting anything outside unskilled work and this means getting the lowest emoluments. *Adibasi* labour is generally classified as *Jungli* labour. A distinction is drawn between one skill and another. I do not think I am doing any injustice to the majority of employers when I say that their general attitude to whatever *Adibasis* do must be treated as unskilled work. Different rates of wages exist for the same work, *Adibasis* invariably getting least.

**Contractors,
contractors
everywhere**

Employment is uncertain. In most industrial areas unskilled workers are handled by contractors. This is indirect employment which has been condemned by every Labour Enquiry. Under contractors workers get less, payments are irregular, hours of work are arbitrary and no amenities of any sort exist. Perhaps, the greatest evil in the labour field is indirect employment and sooner contract-labour is abolished the better for stability in the labour front.

**They form a
weak unit in
the Trade
Union
Movement**

With famine conditions and general indigence staring hard-hit rural districts in the face, the glamour of higher rates in industrial employment attracts thousands of *Adibasis* to factories and mines. They soon get disillusioned. Compared to the rural wages, industrial earnings may seem high but the purchasing power of money is far from favourable to the workers. Everything has to be bought and there is no way of supplementing one's needs with free forest produce. The result is that unskilled factory-wrights do not get enough to

eat and they are easy victims of money-lenders and, in a sense, a weak link in the Trade Union Movement.

People take Advantage of his Illiteracy and his lack of Resistance

In his village, an *Adibasi* is accustomed to verbal dealings. His word is honoured and he can rely on the promises of others. In towns, the whole atmosphere is one of distrust. He is illiterate and everyone takes advantage of his worldly ignorance. I have known so many cases where a foreman has given leave to an *Adibasi*, say, to go to his village but, on his return, he finds this is denied by the foreman, with the result that service is terminated, interrupted or renewed with a heavy fine.

The Tea Industry has been built up entirely with *Adibasi* labour crimped from the Chota Nagpur Plateau and Chattisgarh. In the early days labourers, men, women and children, were recruited on short contracts. It is now useless to dwell on the terrible hardships common to all tea estates, a decade ago. Things have changed a good deal. Now there is a permanent tea garden population in Assam and North Bengal. In Assam, there are nearly six lakhs of Chota Nagpuris, permanently settled there.

The Adibasi at Jamshedpur

Jamshedpur is a clear example of the good and evil industrial life has on *Adibasis*. There are about 60,000 workers in the Tata Iron and Steel Coy., and its allied concerns. There has been so much persistent propaganda about ideal conditions of workers in Jamshedpur that it is as well to say a few words about *Adibasis* there. In terms of money the wages at Tatas sound high but few care to find out how high the index of prices is. Eighty per cent of the employees are under contractors and I have already stated above that they are iniquitous employers.

Jamshedpur is perhaps the most cosmopolitan industrial town in India. Here we may see colonics of Punjabis, Madrasis, Bengalis, and 'Hindusthanis'. Workers from the United Provinces and Bihar are locally called Hindusthanis. All these people will be found in the Notified Area, a good many of them living in quarters provided by the employers. You will not find any *Adibasi* there. They prefer to live outside the Notified Area. There are scores of bustees all round Jamshedpur. After their work, you will find Santhals singing back to their distant bustees.

The hard day's work does not undermine their buoyancy. They must seek solace in their singing and dancing. A great many of the *Adibasi* workers walk as much as five miles to get their work. Imagine what this means! They must get up very early to cook their meals, walk several miles to work and then again trudge back home for the night.

**What they
want is
Assured
Employment**

Uncertainty of employment is the main problem among *Adibasis*. Employers complain perennially that *Adibasis* absent themselves too much and cannot be made to become permanent hands. The truth of the matter is that they have one leg in their paddy fields and the other in the factories. Neither is sufficient to keep them going and, even where an *Adibasi* may be getting good wages, the charm of village festivals is too strong for him to resist. It has been my experience that *Adibasis* who have completely divorced themselves from their paddy fields are as reliable as any other workers. The problem, therefore, is to make industrial employment definite and certain so that *Adibasis* may safely feel they can emigrate to factories without any fear of ever becoming incomeless.

**They won't
be 'Jungli'
any more**

There is one aspect of *Adibasi* labour that has received too little attention. The last war gave *Adibasis* their great opportunity. There was more recruitment among *Adibasis* than any other Indian group. Thousands and thousands went to all parts of the country and overseas to various kinds of employment, skilled and otherwise. Women also went. As many as eight *Adibasis* went to England as Bevin trainees, six *Adibasis* rose to become officers in the Forces and scores held Viceroy's Commissions. All this experience has given *Adibasis* generally a new confidence in themselves. How the factories and mines will be affected, it is yet difficult to say. One thing is however certain, and it is that *Adibasis* will be more eclectic in seeking employment. There will have to be a new outlook on 'Jungli' labour.



AGRICULTURAL LABOUR NOT QUIESCENT ANYMORE

K. C. RAMKRISHNAN

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The agricultural Labour force of the country is growing in number, both absolutely and in proportion to the total agricultural population ; it would be a case of indulgence in terminological inexactitude to treat share-croppers as tenants for they are labourers, too ; contrary to popular assumption agricultural labour is mobile ; the agricultural labour market is full of vagaries but it may be worth the country's while to experiment with Rural Labour Exchanges by linking them with Local Bodies such as Group Village Committees ; they do not get enough work and fresh avenues of employment must be created, specially in view of the fact that with the development of a more or

less permanent urban industrial labour force, industry's doors are not open any more; wages are chaotic and horribly sub-standard; enforcement of wage regulations would be difficult but as "a gesture of good will on the part of Governmenta general policy.....as regards the standard of wages that should be paid to labourers on land on the minimum standard of living that it is desirable to enforce" is essential.

Shri Ramkrishnan finds that agricultural labour is no longer quiescent; it is aware of its position and aware of the strength that organisation yields; in some cases, it has even been violent. The problem is as big as the country but brooks no delay.

**Agricultural
labourers are
growing in
number**

THERE is a general impression that India is a country of peasant-proprietors and there is no serious labour problem in agriculture. At a meeting held under the auspices of the International Labour Office at Geneva nine years ago, a representative of India stated: "Wage-earners form only a very small minority of the total rural population and their conditions of work and wages depend on the prosperity of the peasants and small holders". While it is true that most of the wage-earners are at the mercy of small masters with ownership or occupancy rights on land, it is wrong to deny the very existence of the teeming millions of labourers who are growing in number both absolutely and in proportion to the total agricultural population. Decennial census figures do not completely reveal this. The petty peasant calls himself a ryot and is disinclined to divulge the fact that on several days in the year, when he has no work on his own tiny holding, he goes out to work as a hired labourer on others' land. Revenue accounts show a great increase in the number of land-holders paying a very small revenue. Recent Tenancy Acts in some Provinces and States have conferred some security of tenure on tenants-at-will, many of whom cannot maintain their families without themselves going out or sending out members of their family to work for wages. The latter are dubbed as dependents on the head of the family though they sweat and swell the family income.

**It is a
misnomer
to call them
Tenants**

The Metayer tenants or share-croppers found in every part of India, and especially in tracts irrigated by canals, are, for all practical purposes, labourers agreeing to take their wages in the shape of a share of produce at the time of harvest—which may fluctuate according to seasons, pests and diseases—the share varying with the outlay on seeds, manures, wages for casual labour, etc., and the loans advanced free of interest by land-holders to the tenants. It is a misnomer to call them tenants in the sense in which farmers are so called elsewhere. They are socially and economically not very different from the Depressed classes who constitute the main labour force in agriculture. Most of the big land-holders in every Province fight shy of cultivating their big holdings on their own account, but lease them out in small pieces to tenants on share or fixed lease. Even small holders, if they

belong to higher castes, seldom cultivate their holdings themselves with hired labour, especially in canal irrigated tracts, but lease them out to scheduled caste share-croppers. For fixed lease of larger area, tenants of a higher social and economic status are preferred.

There is in fact a tendency, especially in canal irrigated tracts, for share-tenancy to give place to fixed lease, not only because of growing number of absentee land-holders who cannot exercise any supervision over cultivation, but also because of the unwillingness of the local landlords to exert themselves or take any risk in cultivation. This has led to the growth of an intermediary class of tenants who are harder task-masters of the actual tillers than the big owners of the land or even their paid agents. While not all the land-holders are really peasant proprietors, tilling their land in any Province, there are a number of small-holders, especially of dry and garden (well-irrigated) lands who carry on cultivation with their own and family labour, engaging casual labour for operations like weeding and harvesting. Being men of small means themselves, they are reluctant to pay good wages and are intolerant of slack work. They are not easy to serve under, except in busy seasons. Many of these small-holders, though claiming to be superior socially to the Depressed classes, offer themselves as casual labourers, when they have no work on their own land and create a glut in the labour market, depressing wages all round.

ew Recruits e pouring in

Field labourers at present are drawn not only from communities wedded to agricultural labour from ancient times, but also from those who formerly followed, and even now follow as a subsidiary occupation, some other pursuits - pastoral, fishing, toddy-drawing, oil-pressing, leather working etc. They are obliged to take to agricultural labour, as their traditional occupation cannot keep them going throughout the year.

Many of the decaying cottage industries of India are adding their quota to the ever-increasing supply of agricultural labour. Those who do not find enough scope for pursuing their hereditary calling in or near their village naturally think of labour on land as their first refuge. When this fails they move out to towns and industries where there is some demand for their skill, or even as casual labourers or mill hands.

There is considerable mobility of agricultural labour

Contrary to general assumption, the Indian agricultural labourer, if he is landless, is remarkably mobile, when he finds there is no work for him at or near his village. The Depressed classes in particular rove about with their families in search of harvests near and far after the local harvest is over and there is no second crop to engage them at home. There are regular streams of migration every season from the interior dry districts in Madras to the deltaic areas and river valleys where paddy is to be harvested, from the densely populated eastern parts of the United Provinces and Bihar to the rice and jute harvests of Bengal, from Central India and Chota Nagpur to the wheat and cotton harvests of Central Provinces, from the dry districts of Eastern Punjab and Rajputana to the wheat and sugarcane harvests in the canal colonies of Western Punjab. Cotton and groundnut picking, where they are grown as dry crops, do not attract enough labour when monsoon fails. Plantations of tea, coffee and rubber in Assam and South India attract labour from longer distances, but not generally with families, though some who repeatedly go are inclined to take families later and even settle down, if houses and land for own cultivation are provided by employers. A sudden influx of a large number of labourers with only a crude improvisation of lodging and board and no provision for sanitation and medical aid—which only well established plantations provide—is, besides causing discomfort to the temporary migrants, a real menace to public health. Such migrations of harvesters both internally and from neighbouring countries are quite common in Europe and America. But special arrangements are now-a-days made especially in the United States, to accommodate such migrant labour in Farm Labour Camps, and to provide cooking and sleeping quarters in the Farm Cafeteria.

Vagaries of the agricultural Labour Market

The demand for labour in agriculture is quite different from that in industries where it can be easily anticipated and provided for. There is a peak demand for labour in agriculture in certain seasons and for certain operations—preparatory cultivation, sowing or transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing etc.—which are considerably affected by vagaries of weather, pests and diseases. We have little data on the demand for hired labour in agriculture that would help us direct labourers seeking employment on land.

Knowledge of local demand in a village or cluster of villages is confined to recruiters of labour who are alert and helpful to the employers and the labourers, though at the expense of both. A system of Rural Labour Exchanges might be tried on the model of Industrial Labour Exchanges and the responsibility to find work and workers entrusted to agents of local bodies like the group Village Committees, recently organised in Madras. But there are difficulties in working them. Labourers are not literate and so cannot take the initiative. Employers may not foresee demand sufficiently in advance due to disturbing factors, or may like to pick and choose their own labourers except when there is acute pressure.

In some of the village surveys published and the evidence tendered to the Royal Commission on Agriculture, estimates have been made of the total labour requirements of crops per acre and in some cases of the number of days of work available on land in a year. Few of these give an idea of the distribution of work throughout the cultivation season of any crop, much less of the number of days on which hired labour is wanted in addition to or in place of family labour. The extent of overlapping in the demand for several crops on several holdings at one and the same time should be known. Periods of excessive demand for, and excessive supply of, labour are characteristic features of agricultural labour. Mere employment, more evenly spread throughout the major part of the year, is a desideratum in agriculture, but it is hard to find now. In this respect garden land (well-irrigated) cultivation is best, canal irrigated land comes next and dry land cultivation comes last. But even in well-irrigated lands, demand for labour on certain occasions is so far in excess of the supply that enterprising and resourceful landlords in Gujerat and Coimbatore have begun to use labour-saving machines and implements and power (oil or electricity) for operations like lifting water, crushing sugarcane, chaff cutting etc. This has a tendency to throw out of work in normal times more man-labour than woman-labour, which is still wanted for weeding, transplanting and harvesting where no improvements have been introduced—just the opposite of what we might wish: to liberate women for household work and attention to children. If this tendency persists, men may find less employment on land and get more spare-time in the year off the land.

**Plenty of
time on their
hands**

Except on intensively cultivated garden-lands with diverse crops, and on wetlands where sugarcane, plantains, tobacco, betel-vine, etc., are cultivated, there is plenty of spare time for cultivators and labourers depending on them. Limits are set to the extension of intensive cultivation by conditions of water supply, working capital, marketing facilities, the consuming capacity of people in the area especially in the case of perishables like milk, fruits and vegetables. Milch animals are not generally maintained by labour families except in Charator taluqa of Gujerat and Coimbatore in the South. They give more occupation to housewives than to men. So also is poultry-farming, while sheep-rearing engages boys. Both Hindus and Muslims strongly object to pig-rearing and the market for its products is very limited. These can provide only supplementary sources of income for the family but not sufficient employment for the male labourers. The Charka (hand-spinning) in spite of all the propaganda done has not been taken up by labourers except in parts of the Punjab and Madras, where the old tradition was unbroken. Hand-loom weaving is treated as too much of a skilled job by most agriculturists, though here and there some coarse weaving is done by some of the Depressed Class workers.

**Industry does
not welcome
them any
more**

Seasonal processing factories like cotton gins, rice mills, sugar mills, groundnut decorticators do afford some employment to agriculturists in spare-time, but sometimes they also compete with land-lords for labour—especially at harvest time (e. g. sugar mills in Bihar) though not all the factories are prepared to raise the wages for labour to the level of harvesting wages in irrigated tracts. Coal mines in Bengal and Bihar, iron mines in Bihar, mica mines in Bihar and Madras, manganese mines in Central Provinces and gold mines in Mysore afford some employment for agricultural labourers in the neighbourhood and in some cases to labourers at a distance—generally Depressed classes and aborigines who are hardier than the rest. The perennial factories also attract some labour from land; but such recruitment is declining, as these factories fight shy of people who slip away at the busy agricultural seasons in such numbers that the factories had to curtail production considerably. The (Rege) Labour Investigation Committee, whose main report was recently published by the

Government of India made a close statistical study of this question of how far the factories were affected by their labourers taking active part in agricultural operations in their village and came to the conclusion: "The bulk of the factory workers though immigrant in character have little share in agriculture and are pushed rather than pulled by the cities.....their occasional visits to their village homes are more for rest and recuperation than for attending to cultivation. This is particularly so at present in the cotton mills where "generally the younger members of the family migrate to the city for working in the mills while the others attend to agricultural operations in their villages." This is also the case in the Engineering industry, where only temporarily drawn workers return to villages, while the permanent labourers settle down in the industry. But this is not the case in the mines - iron, mica, manganese, though in the gold mines of Kolar. Hajijans have settled down for more than a generation.

**Proper
Assessment
of wages
cannot be
made**

There are no official records of current wages in agriculture. The weekly Government Gazette in Provinces gives no detailed figures of rates of wages prevailing in different parts but simply states whether wages in general have kept pace with or exceeded or lagged behind prices of crops. Some provinces have a quinquennial census of wages for a few agricultural operations in selected "typical" centres—not picked out by the random sample method and the range of wages given for any kind of work is often too wide to be of any use for forming any judgment. The current wages are so much higher generally than the wages that were in vogue five years back—after which only one or two provinces have taken the wage census—that the former figures look incredible. There was an opportunity to get post-war or nearly post-war figures of their questionnaire. But we find the answers received, and published in the appendix to the report, vague and inadequate in most cases.

It is indeed difficult to give a correct estimate of wages in agriculture over any wide area. The rates differ widely from tract to tract, even within short distances, according to the supply of and demand for labour at any particular time. Generally speaking, the demand is greater than supply in irrigated tracts, especially at the busy seasons of preparatory

cultivation and harvesting of the major crop—when the rate is highest and is almost the only occasion for saving a little for the leaner days. Payment in kind, a particular quantity of grain per day or a certain proportion of the produce harvested, is invariably the rule in the harvest of cereal crops. Harvesters refuse to take wages in cash at present at any rate so far as grains are concerned. In the case of commercial crops like cotton, groundnut and sugarcane, cash wages are more common and even then a small quantity of the produce harvested is given in addition, which, some use at home and many sell away to small dealers or consumers, generally at less than market price. There is a tendency on the part of land holders or tenants who engage labour, nibble at wages in kind by the use of false measures and short measuring, especially at dusk.

Permanent farm servants working on garden-land or wet-land and also living in cottages provided by the master are paid by the month in grain, which would just suffice for a small family so far as bare feeding is concerned. Unless the wife and a grown-up child also go out for casual labour either on the master's farm or outside, the other needs of the family cannot be met. A little cash is paid in addition to grain and on one or two festive days in the year the farm servant gets a piece or two of cloth. In some parts of the country a simple mid-day meal or gruel in the morning is given. Tobacco, betel and nut, and occasionally when there is heavy work tips for drinking are supplied in some parts of the country; but all told, these perquisites are not a substantial addition to the cash or grain wages paid to the farm servant.

**However
difficult of
enforcement
standard-
wages must
be fixed**

Regulation of wages in agriculture and fixation of minimum wage and enforcing it would be very difficult in India because of the fluctuations in wages from place to place, time to time and man to man, the different methods and media of payment, the immense number of small employers, the scattered nature of employment, the easiness of evasion due to the collusion of the employer and the helpless unorganized employees seeking work to keep off starvation. Louise E. Howard says: "In backward countries, as a rule, only general measures to add to the prosperity of the agricultural-proletariat can be contemplated; more access to the land and freedom from indebtedness are more important to any

depressed section of such rural population than the raising of wage levels". Still it may be a gesture of good-will on the part of the Government towards labour if a general policy is laid down as regards the standard of wages that should be paid to labourers on land based on the minimum standard of living that it is desirable to enforce—leaving to local committees or wage boards the power to fix rates to suit local conditions.

**A very low
standard of
living**

The existing standard of living of the field labourer is far from satisfactory. Judged by the data in published economic surveys of villages and by the special studies made of diets by the Indian Research Fund Association, it is clear that the food taken by rural labour families even in pre-war years was insufficient in some respects and ill-balanced on the whole. The situation has now worsened. To the labourers and even to small holders in South and East India, 'a square meal' meant plenty of rice, some pulses and vegetables, fish, a little meat, very little of milk or milk products and oil. Actually they consume too much of rice (16 to 20 ozs. a day) or tapioca, too little of pulses (0.5 to 1.5 ozs.) and of some vegetables or meat occasionally and practically no milk or milk products. Balanced diets for labourers have been prescribed by Nutrition experts, but the chances of obtaining them for labourers are at present more remote than ever.

The standard, however, may be kept in view in prescribing rates of wages in future and more propaganda done among labourers themselves so that they may avoid waste and economise the resources available to their best advantage—take less of carbohydrates, more of proteins and fats and not insist on rice when millets can be had. It is indeed a pity that millets are less desired, as labourers have got used to the taste of rice in pre-war years and they are also less inclined to take the trouble to prepare food out of millets after a hard days work. Tea or coffee, with a little goat's milk added to it by some, has become more popular in the last 25 years. Bidi or cigarette has become indispensable to many. Drinking toddy, sometimes arrack, was an old practice, which depressed their standard still further, as it left little for spending on the necessaries of life for themselves and their families and kept them perpetually in debt. Prohibition, which is being rapidly spread in every province

is bound to lift them up socially and economically and improve the health of families.

Housing of labourers is generally of the most wretched kind, especially of the Depressed classes in low lying cheries, which are really rural slums with no proper streets or drains, nor water supply, nor lights. They live in ill-ventilated small huts. The cottages of employers to which some of them are tied, added to the initial loans they get free of interest, pin them down to particular spots with little or no chance of emancipation. Even in villages where one might think there was no lack of space available, most of the houses are single room tenements where all members have to huddle themselves in winter and the rainy season. The sanitation of labour quarters is worse than that of any other—low as the general level is.

No wonder that in the above circumstances the agricultural labourers are victims of a number of chronic ailments which work more havoc in the long run than the spectacular epidemics like cholera, plague and small pox. Malaria is the worst scourge afflicting people in ill-drained monsoon areas. At least 20 per cent of the working days are lost for workers on account of this disease. Beri-beri is due to excessive use of polished rice. Hookworm is an almost universal disease of workers in wet-land areas; it enfeebles rather than kills at once and is the cause of inefficiency of many workers.

Clothing in a tropical region is not of such importance as in colder regions where even the poorest must have some warm clothing. The man-labourer in the country-side is content to have a loin cloth to hide his nakedness and the woman too is often 'dressed' in rags of cloth—once presented by obliging employer. As for fuel little is purchased; it is a spare-time occupation for women and children to gather stalks, stubbles, twigs, etc., in the villages for which they do not need to pay anything. Lighting is not a problem for them as they have little to read and so go to bed early. In fact the only rationed article they seem to get in excess of need, and therefore save, is kerosene. That is a measure of their literacy.

An informal indenture system keeps them bound

Chronic indebtedness is the lot of most labourers in spite of such abstemiousness. This was partly due to drink in the past, but largely due to want of work even at low wages for

a great part of the year. Money lenders are seldom anxious to lend them as they consider the chances of recovery are not bright. A good part of the loans is on the pledge of their vessels, etc. Even co-operative credit societies do not consider them fit to borrow as they have little land to offer as security and their character and capacity to repay are not taken serious note of in spite of Raiffeisen tradition. Most of the loans of tenants and farm servants, which they seldom repay in full, are from their own landlords who also are not anxious to recover them in full lest they should lose their hold on them. They are in fact prepared to lend again and recover in part; that is the technique of keeping alive this informal indenture system of labour, however much legislation might attempt to kill it.

Efficiency of labour is a matter of standard of living and environment

Efficiency of labour under the conditions sketched above cannot be great, though it is often under-estimated. Efficiency is a complex affair not easy to measure and compare especially in agriculture with different conditions of soil, climate, animal power, implements and the direction and incentives to work. Different races and communities seem to respond differently to similar physical and economic forces. Some develop skill in certain lines; others in the same area and environment remain unskilled. The few that have had any chance of elementary education lapse into illiteracy very soon. Adult education, which may produce quicker results, is more in the region of planning than of performance. It is gratifying to learn that Indian agricultural labourers rated so low in their own country are the best of labourers in plantations and other estates in the tropical colonies of the Far East and the Far West, where they had none of the social and economic handicaps they suffer from in their homeland. A committee of enquiry that went to Guiana and Trinidad stated that when the period of indenture ceased the efficiency of the Indian labourers increased by 20 per cent, they earned more and saved enough to remit money home for purchase of land or they acquired land in the colonies and settled down as cultivators. Such improvement has not been the lot of labourers who emigrated in larger numbers to Ceylon and Malaya though even here they were acknowledged as superior to native labourers. This may be due to difference in wages and treatment or to the temptations unchecked of a new social and economic environment.

**They do not
take things
lying down
anymore**

Thanks to the rise in prices and Communist propaganda for some years now, organisations of agricultural workers—wage earners and share-croppers—which had been simply passing pious resolutions at the bidding of a few bosses have begun to show their power for direct action in a rather violent way at times. Demands for higher wages, lower rents and more amenities which had been met with sneering scorn by landlords have been reinforced recently by workers taking the law into their own hands—carrying away produce, defying eviction, cultivating lands without permission, and in a few cases by rioting and murder too, even in parts of the country where they used to be very quiescent in the past. The landlords too have not looked on passively, it would appear. There have been allegations of eviction of labourers and tenants at short notice, not only from lands but from cottages they occupied, burning of huts, employment of goondas from outside in the guise of labourers to break the back—sometimes literally—of the labourer in revolt. The “Grow More Food Campaign” has suffered by lands lying fallow and the Government has had to interfere with public safety orders to restore peace and order. The small-holders, not only rentiers but active cultivators, have not been the least sufferers. However much the latter might sympathise with labour as they themselves were labourers any implementation of it meant a diminution of their income, already too low for maintaining a decent standard of life to which they were accustomed in the past. The situation calls not only for improvement of the status of the labourer and the active small holder, but also for the reconstruction of holdings to a reasonable size, improvement in the methods of cultivation and the provision of more and more avenues of employment for the surplus rural workers.

CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

A STORY OF MERCILESS HUMAN
WRECKAGE

MISS KATAYUN H. CAMA, M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D.,

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Dr. Cama does not mince words because the sight of this grossest form of exploitation of child by man makes her heart bleed; she uses violent language because India's children are victims of social violence. She sees the child as an industrial labourer (in regulated factories), as a much-battered drudge (in unregulated ones), as a serf of the plough, as a domestic slave, a beast of burden, and as a victim of immoral traffic. That is the range—as wide as the country and as deep as our indifference. Law as far as it goes had been ineffective in scotching the evil and public opinion has been quiescent. The problem is not one of mitigating the horrors of child labour but one of total

abolition of child labour. Fundamentally, it is a part of the general problem of social welfare, a thorough-going, sham-smashing orientation. As a socio-economic problem, it is one of an all-out endeavour to raise the family income of the average man whose two ends can never be made to meet however much he may try—somebody or something, he does not know who or what, throws them far apart than they were before. Dr. Cama wants the child to be the State's first concern and charge. If the present conditions are allowed to continue for any length of time the nation's man-hood and woman-hood will suffer a well-deserved impoverishment.

It is a ghastly story that ought to make every thinking man sit up and think purposefully and do something to salvage this human wreckage and make this evil exploitation impossible.

The century of the Child

MAN in search of the ever-eluding and ever-challenging dream of peace, happiness and freedom from want has, through centuries, tried to evolve different patterns of socio-economic-political structure of the State and of Society, and, as each pattern resulted in greater failure than the previous one, Man realised that perhaps if he turned from the more abstract values of the State and of Society to the more natural and human values of the Rights of Man he might come nearer the threshold of his dream. But the philosophic foundations of the French doctrine of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were shattered and uprooted by the Industrial Revolution, and Man in the helplessness of failure and frustration turned to the Rights of the Woman. When even the recognition of the rights of women did not bring him any nearer his dream, and his stupendous scientific creations and inventions only served to accentuate his failure by throwing him into greater chaos, confusion and destruction, he was compelled to change the emphasis from the State, the Society, the Man and the Woman to the Child. Ellen Key goes so far as to label the present century "The Century of the Child". Yet, in spite of the great awakening of consciousness regarding the rights of childhood and the modern discovery of the significance of early childhood years in the development of personality, and in spite of all the advances in the biological, psychological, physical and social sciences during the past quarter of a century, the magnitude of our ignorance concerning the economic and emotional needs of the child remains colossal.

If this latest attempt of Man to create a better and a happier world is likely to end in as sorry a failure as the rest of his efforts in the past it will only be because of the woeful deficiency of his knowledge regarding the complex nature of the being called the Child and because of Man's blatant refusal to recognise the rights of the child in actual human and industrial relationships in spite of his theoretical acceptance of the principle that the future of every nation depends upon the child.

Let us examine only one aspect of the child's life, namely, his life as a labourer in just one country of the world, India,

and see how far the rights of childhood are respected and to what extent they are ignored and deliberately flouted.

Scope of Child Labour in India

Child labour in India assumes many subtle and complicated forms and, therefore, right at the outset, it will be well for us to realise that when we speak of child labour we do not refer merely to children in industries but to children engaged in all forms of non-industrial and physically and morally dangerous trades and occupations without any effective legal protection.

Child labour is a Social ill

Work is essential for the normal healthy growth of the child as it develops initiative, self-sufficiency, and is preparation for later self-support, independence and freedom. It is usual for every normal child to work in and around his home and to assist the parents in their daily round of domestic duties. This type of work is necessary in the early education of the child as it is in keeping with the modern principle of learning by doing, and as it is part of the child's training in self-development. But when this healthy developmental function of work in childhood is substituted by the economic function of wage-earning, we have the socially pathologic condition of child labour. While work in childhood is a social good and a national gain, child labour is a social ill and a national waste, as the economic necessity for wage-earning to support the family deprives the child of opportunities for education, wholesome play and recreation, stunts his physical growth, interferes with the normal development of his personality and thwarts his preparation for adult responsibilities. In short, child labour is a downright defiance of the Rights of the Child and a sad commentary on the social pathology of our times, in this "Century of the Child".

Bearing in mind, then, this strange paradoxical phenomenon of Man's incessant struggle to better the conditions and standards of living and to win the fight against poverty and starvation, and frustration of these very object by his own failure to recognise human rights and needs, let us study the different types of child labour in India and see what the champions of the Rights of the Child have done to afford protection to the child against it or to mitigate the evil effects of child labour.

The Child as an Industrial Labourer

Historically, the economic practice of child labour signifying material contribution to the labour economy of the family dates back to the Industrial Revolution when the child was removed from his home, field and village and placed in the factory. Since then, the demand of industry for cheap labour grew so rapidly and the poverty of the masses became so acute that the tendency to exploit child labour increased in an unprecedented manner. As a result, large numbers of children began to be employed in organised factories when large industrial concerns came into existence in India about the middle of the last century. In the absence of State control over conditions of employment in any industry in India or of any legal or executive action for the protection of the child, appalling abuses came into existence, and children of tender years were exploited as so many factory 'hands' for specialised routine jobs of no educational or vocational value and made to work for excessively long hours on a few annas a day. These abuses continued almost up to the end of the 19th century when the first Factories Act was passed in 1881.

Legislation follows Social Realisation

This history of labour organisation for the protection of the child labourer is the history of gradual realisation on the part of the legislative authorities of the evils of child labour. Every change in factory legislation represents a change on the basis of past experience and an attempt to remedy some, if not all, the defects. Most of the changes relate mainly to age-limit and hours of labour and are by their very nature post-mortem remedies.

The principal enactments in India as far as factory legislation in concerned are the Factories Act of 1881, the amendments of 1891, the Act of 1911, the amendments of 1922, the Act of 1934 and finally the Employment of Children Act of 1939.

Acts and Commissions and more Acts

The Act of 1881 defined a 'factory' as any premises using mechanical power and employing 100 persons simultaneously for four months or more in the year. It declared a 'child' to be a person between the ages of 7 and 12 years and restricted his hours of work at 9 a day with a rest interval of one hour. Four holidays had to be given each month and

children were prohibited from cleaning machinery in motion and from working between the fixed and moving parts of machinery. This latter provision was necessary to prevent serious or fatal accidents which were a fairly common result of children working on spinning mules. Children were also prohibited from working in two factories on the same day, and, in the absence of compulsory birth registration in India, provisions for the certification of children for age and fitness were incorporated. But the most important feature — or perhaps that providing the biggest loophole in the Act — was the definition of the 'factory' itself which divided factories into two groups: those coming under the Act and those outside its scope, the former being known as 'regulated' and the latter as 'unregulated' factories.

As these provisions were all too inadequate to protect the working child and the abuses and exploitation of children continued unabated with evasion of law being the common practice rather than the exception, Commissions were appointed and 1891 amendments followed.

The number of persons required to constitute a factory was reduced from 100 to 50 thus bringing under control a larger number of factories, whilst local Governments could by notification extend the Act to concerns using power and employing between 20 and 50 persons. The definition of 'employed' was extended to include all persons whether adults or children, and the lower age limit for a child was raised from 7 to 9 and the upper age from 12 to 14. Except in shift-working factories, a compulsory stoppage of work for half an hour for all persons was required and subject to exceptions, a weekly holiday had to be given. The employment of children at night was prohibited and their daily hours reduced from 9 to 7. To prevent a 'traffic' in children's certificates, a penalty for using a false certificate was enacted.

**Things Stood
Still for
Twenty
Years**

These amendments were followed by a quiet period of twenty years with no further advance in Factory Legislation. It was hoped that the reduction of the hours of work of the children to 7 would result in a decrease in the demand for child labour. But, in spite of every restriction, the exploitation of child labour increased on account of the industrial boom in the early part of the 20th century, and the consequent shortage of adult labour and the demand of adults

for higher wages. Over and above the employment of a comparatively larger proportion of children, there were flagrant evasions of the law both by the employment of children under age and by forcing them to work considerably longer hours than the hours permitted. There was a strong agitation, therefore, in the late nineties and the early years of this century for further changes.

Accordingly, a Factory Labour Commission was appointed to make an investigation, and on their recommendation, a new Factories Act was passed in 1911 and brought into operation in 1912. Not many effective changes were made as far as the child was concerned. The definition of a 'child' was unchanged and the age-limits remained unaltered at 9 and 14. But a distinction was made between textile and other factories and the child's hours of work were limited to 6 in textile factories and to 7 in others. Employment of children was prohibited not only between 7 p.m. and 5-30 a.m. but also in certain dangerous processes. Age and fitness certificates were required of all children but the age-limit set by the Act was, in practice, much lower owing to the abuse of the age certificate system. Though considerable advances were made in the health and safety requirements and substantial increases were made in factory inspection staff to prevent evasions of the Act, the scandal of employment of children in two different factories on the same day under two different names and two different certificates began to assume glaring proportions.

**A Definite
Step was
taken**

Experience of the 1911 Act disclosed a number of defects, while the growth of public opinion fostered by the War and the setting up of the International Labour Organization under the terms of the Peace Treaty led to a sweeping revision of the Act in 1922. By these amendments the distinction between the textile and the non-textile factories was abolished and the definition of a 'factory' was altered to include all concerns using power and employing 20 or more persons, whilst local Governments were enabled, by notification, to extend the Act to concerns wherein 10 or more persons were employed. The Act of 1922 took another step for the protection of the child-worker by excluding altogether those under 12 years of age from factory work and by raising the age at which the industrial child became an adult to 15 years. In addition, it reduced the hours of work

to 6 in the hope that the results of the possible evasions of the law by false age and fitness certification would be less serious than under the old system. It also made parents and guardians liable to penalty for the double employment of children under two certificates. Further, besides the initial medical examination for age and physical fitness before admission to employment in factories, children were required to undergo re-examination for continuing work if thought necessary by the Inspector. No child was to be worked for more than 4 hours at a stretch without a rest-interval of half an hour. Fatal accidents to infants and children who were brought into the factory led to the grant of power to the Inspector, subject to appeal, to prohibit their admission to factories, whilst a new feature was the control of employment of women and young persons on dangerous lead processes.

**But Law was
Difficult of
Enforcement**

Thus, although the restrictions imposed by the Act of 1922 were far more far-reaching than those of all the preceding Acts, they were concerned entirely with the employment of labour; and the removal of the restriction on the use of machinery textile in factories, the abolition of the control of the inspector over a system of shifts, and the deletion of the provision for a simultaneous rest-interval added to the difficulties of administration.

Weak administration of labour legislation is another factor to be considered as it encourages evasions of the law, no matter how good the intentions of the framers of the law for the protection of the worker. During the period of the twelve years that the Act of 1922 was in operation, evasions had become quite common, conviction were not easy to obtain, and it was found that the penalties for serious offences were too light and factory inspection was inadequate and ineffective.

Slight changes were made in 1923, 1926 and 1931—the most important being the one to impose stricter penalties on parents and guardians who permitted children to work in two factories after obtaining two different certificates.

**Royal Com-
mission and
the Factories
Act of 1934**

In view of this situation the Royal Commission on Labour visited India in 1929 and 1930 and a very comprehensive survey of Indian labour conditions resulted. Partly as a result of this study the new Factories Act of 1934 was passed.

This Act recognised three classes of factories, viz., perennial factories, continuous production factories and seasonal factories, i. e. those concerns that work during certain well-defined seasons, and do not ordinarily work for more than 180 days in the year. The Act also tightened up administration in several respects and made improvements in the system of factory inspection. It further revised the scale of penalties for second and subsequent convictions for offences relating to the employment of children and adolescents. It is this Act which created among factory operatives a fourth group, the group of 'adolescents' who are defined as persons of both sexes over the age of 15 and under the age of 17, but who have not been certified as fit for employment as adults. Such adolescents as are not so certified are to be deemed as children.

The maximum hours of work for children were fixed at 5 and a special provision stated that no child may be exempted from the weekly holiday under any circumstance. The 'spread over' for children was limited to 7½ hours, and no child was to be employed except during the time allotted to women. Rules were also framed to secure protection of persons employed on lead processes, the manufacture of aerated waters, and processes connected with the manufacture of rubber, chromium plating, cellulose spraying, sand blasting and the generation and use of petrol gas. In some instances, women, adolescents and children were prohibited from employment altogether on these dangerous processes.

The Act of 1934 was further amended in 1935 and 1936 and the Provincial Governments have passed rules whereby factories that ordinarily employ more than 100 women are required to provide suitable 'room' for the use of their children, and to arrange for their supervision. The amendment of 1935 prevented women supervisors from working at night while the amendment of 1936 extended the definition of a 'factory' to permit Local Governments to bring under regulation, work done in the open air.

A recent all-India amendment has applied certain provisions of the Act to small factories, i. e., to premises using power and employing between 10 to 22 persons if children are employed. The same provisions may be applied by Provincial Governments to power concerns employing less than 10 persons if children are employed.

The Employment of Children Act

The Employment of Children Act which is an all-India legislation came into operation in 1939. By this Act occupiers are required to send in a notice and the employment of children below the age of 12 is prohibited. Children under 15 in occupations connected with railway transport and the handling of goods are prohibited from employment. Though Provincial Governments are empowered under this Act to include any other industries besides those mentioned in the act in which the employment of children under 2 years should be prohibited, it is regrettable that the Act is not yet effectively applied in the Provinces.

This brief sketch of factory legislation in regard to child labour clearly shows that since 1881 every change has tended to increase the minimum age-limit of the child labourer and to decrease his maximum hours of work. It also brings out the significant fact that very vast improvements in the law have been made from time to time on the basis of past experience and by the method of trial and error and that the trend in India as elsewhere has been in the direction of greater control over the conditions of employment in factories. Various difficulties and anomalies in the law have been rectified from time to time and genuine efforts made to remedy defects.

A Story of Blatant Evasion of Law

But the problem all along has been not so much the problem of enactment as the problem of enforcement of the law. The employer is not concerned with the child and its needs or his growth and development but with profits. To him child labour is profitable as the wages of children are small, their complaints few, and they accomplish in some industries and occupations as much as an adult. If at much lesser cost he can get as good an yield, why should he pay for adult labour? Such being the psychology of the industrial employer and the economic condition of the masses being so appalling that parents and guardians themselves insist on the employment of the child in industries even at the cost of obtaining false and sometimes double certificates, is it any wonder that the industrial employer gets away with cheap labour and deliberate evasion of the law?

Statistics of Employment

The number of children employed in factories increased about four times from 1892 to 1923 but thereafter it declined steadily every year. The following table shows the increase

in the number of children employed from 1892 to 1922 and the corresponding decrease from 1923 to 1939 respectively in the Bombay Province alone:—

Year	No. of factories	Number of children employed	No. of adolescents	
			Men	Women
1892	253	5,946	...	...
1897	343	6,669	...	...
1902	400	6,779	...	...
1907	519	10,106	...	...
1912	687	14,344	...	...
1917	835	13,092	...	..
1922	1,062	13,392	...	...
1927	1,596	6,322	...	...
1932	1,852	2,792	...	...
1935	1,999	1,941	4,691	655
1936	1,879	922	3,481	689
1937	2,108	466	3,673	412
1938	2,810	943	3,777	343
1939	3,460	920	3,224	482

Table 1

The same sharp decline in the number of children employed from 1923 onwards all over India can be seen from the following Table:—

Year	Children employed	Annual decrease
1923	74,620	—
1924	72,531	2,089
1925	68,725	3,806
1926	60,094	8,631
1927	57,562	2,532
1928	50,911	6,651
1929	46,843	4,068
1930	37,972	8,871
1931	26,932	11,040
1932	21,783	5,149
1933	19,091	2,692
1934	18,362	729
1935	15,457	2,905
1936	12,062	3,395

Table 2

A Decline in Employment of Children in Regulated Factories. This decline in the number of children employed is due partly to the stricter legislation in regard to employment of children and partly to the change in policy adopted by some employers who have substituted adult workers for

children on economic grounds. For instance, the Bombay Millowners' Association decided in 1922 not to employ children in any textile mills in Bombay city after that year. Hence the sharp decrease from 13,392 children employed in 1922 to 6,322 in 1927 in the Bombay Province as seen in Table 1. Though the total decrease in the use of child labour in regulated industries is encouraging, yet there are several Provinces where children are still being employed in large numbers in factories and industrial concerns.

Table 3 below shows the amount of child labour and the Provinces where it is still in great demand :

Extent of Child Labour in 1937

<i>Province</i>	<i>Average Daily Number Employed</i>		
	<i>Adolescents</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Total</i>
Assam	3,916	1,141	5,057
Madras	9,374	5,509	14,883
Bombay	4,085	466	4,551
Bengal	10,376	1,536	11,912
U. P.	1,282	527	1,809
Punjab	2,146	724	2,870

Table—3

**Statistics do
not Tell the
Whole Story**

It must also be remembered that these statistics are neither complete nor comprehensive and the methods employed in collecting them are far from ensuring accuracy, reliability or validity. The collection of statistics regarding wages, conditions of employment and other matters relating to industry in India were left to the mercy and goodwill or voluntary effort of the industrial concerns themselves.

In fact, as far back as 1924, The Government of Bombay had introduced a Bill for the Collection of Statistics in the local Legislative Council; but the Bill was dropped owing to the strong opposition offered by employers' interests against the adoption of a such a measure. Practically, every Labour Commission and Committee urged the necessity of passing a Statistics Act and the subject was discussed at the Eleventh Session of the Industries Conference of 1939 and again at the Second Conference of Labour Ministers in 1941. But it was not till the Government of India introduced a Bill on the subject in the Central Legislative Assembly as late as February 1942 that it was actually passed and became law under the title of the Industrial Statistics Act of 1942. Even this Act belated as it is, is permissive in nature and the decision to apply it in any particular Province rests with the Government of that Province. We can thus imagine how reliable or otherwise the statistics before and after 1942 regarding industrial employment in India could be.

Whether the above figures tell the whole story or not, it is at any rate quite obvious that child labour is still high in the industrialised Provinces of India.

The Child Worker in the Mines

Mining on a large scale is a comparatively recent development in India and therefore Indian Mining Legislation has developed independently of the Indian Factories Act and made fairly rapid strides. Children formed a large part of the mining labour force in the early years of the industry. In 1901 there were as many as 5,147 children under 12 years of age or 4.9% of the total number of employees in the mines. Although the first Indian Mines Act of 1901 defined a 'child' as a person under 12 years of age and granted power to the Chief Inspector to prohibit the employment of children where the conditions in his opinion were dangerous to their health and safety, the provisions were so defective that during the twenty years of its operation conditions of child labour showed hardly any appreciable improvement. In fact, though mining work is particularly injurious to children's health, safety and morality, children still formed a considerable proportion of the labour force—3.4% of the total workers in 1921 still being under 12 years of age.

The condition of employment of labour in Indian mines were therefore, sought to be improved by the Indian Mines Act of 1923, which came into force from the 1st of July 1924. It defined a 'child' as a person under the age of 13 years and prohibited the employment of children in a mine and their presence in any part of a mine which was underground. Even then the number of children employed was 6,381 or 2.5% of the total. The Indian Mines (Amendment) Act of 1925, however, laid down that the employment of children under 15 years of age in any mine, is prohibited and those below the age of 17 are not permitted to work in mines unless certified as physically fit. The certificate of fitness is required by the Act to be in the custody of the manager of the mines and the certified person is required to carry a token of such certificate while at work.

In short, as labour legislation stands to-day, the most striking feature seems to be that no child between 12 and 15 years of age may be employed in factories for more than half the time fixed for adults, and no child below 15 years may be employed in mines. Further, a new group of adolescents between 15 and 17 years has been brought under legal restriction. They may not be employed as adults or in underground work in mines unless certified to be physically fit for work in the mines.

Child Labour in 'Unregulated' Industries

A superficial glance at this review of labour legislation may tend to give a rosy picture of the vast improvements in factory inspection standards, the wide powers of Local Governments in the administration of labour legislation, the large extent to which industrial labour has been brought under control, and the decrease in the number of children employed. Indeed, on the basis of such superficial data we find such responsible officials as the Chief Inspector of Factories, Bombay Province, making such bald and sweeping statements as "The ratio between men and women, and the percentage of children indicate that, from broad social considerations, the Bombay Province has not much to learn from other countries. Child Labour has practically ceased and the abuses connected with child labour have been almost entirely obliterated."

**Protective
Legislation
does not even
Touch the
Fringe of the
Problem**

Apart from the fact that industrial statistics in India are most meagre and misleading as well as unreliable and the fact that even the recent Industrial Statistics Act of 1942 is a permissive piece of legislation, one has only to turn to small scale industries and labour in 'unregulated' factories to find that the protective influence of labour legislation does not touch even the fringe of the problem of child labour in India. For, India is not only a principally rural country but also a land of innumerable small industries, trades and crafts without machinery or power and employing a small number of workers. Thus, by far the larger majority of children are employed in those factories and industries that do not by any chance come under the control of legislation and are known as 'unregulated' factories or industries. In British India alone, there are over several thousands of smaller factories using power as well as others that do not use power. Most of these have not been brought under legislative control either because they do not use power or because they employ less than 10 or 20 workers.

**Let us
Visualise
the Scene**

Appalling as conditions of child labour are in these 'unregulated' factories in British India, they are unutterably loathsome and indescribably inhuman in some of the 'unregulated' factories in certain of the Indian States. In the Warrangal district of Hyderabad State, for instance, there are some carpet and handloom factories where 10 to 20 women and children are squeezed into dirty, dark, single rooms with hardly the capacity to accommodate 2 to 3 persons at the most, together with the weaving apparatus. As there is no light, the women and children work in the dark, being guided merely by the feel of the thread from one end to the other. The ages of children vary from 6 to 10 years and they are paid 4 annas per 500 loops. Out of these handsome daily wages of 4 to 6 annas the child pays 1/3 to the contractor. Several instances of this type could be quoted with regard to dreadful labour conditions in the factories of one State after another, but it is impossible to catalogue them within the short space of this brochure. One has only to refer to the remarks made by the Royal Commission after a thorough investigation of the small tanneries to realise how widespread the evil is. They observed: "We are struck by the lack of adequate sanitary arrangements which make the bulk of such places even more

offensive than is inevitable from the nature of the industry. Adequate drainage is absent and often the whole earth space, spread over a wide area, is littered with heaps of evil-smelling refuse and sodden with pools of filthy water." But that is not all. The workers have to eat their food right there in the unbearable stench and filth and children from 8 to 12 years of age work long hours and often at night in these sickeningly filthy surroundings.

Among these 'unregulated' industries are included tanning, bidi-making, carpet manufacture, wool cleaning, mica, shellac factories, manufacture of matches, bangles, trinkets and a host of other unspecified industries. Most of these are carried on in a single room or part of a room or in tenements or dilapidated structures where working conditions are shocking and impossible.

Work-rooms are Air-less Boxes

Conditions in the bidi-factories are none the better. Here again, the observations of the Royal Commission on Labour in India are most noteworthy. "Every type of building is used, but small workshops preponderate and it is here that the graver problems mainly arise. Many of these places are small airless boxes, often without any windows, where the workers are crowded so thickly on the ground that there is barely room to squeeze between them. Others are semi-basements with damp mud floors unsuitable for manufacturing processes, particularly in an industry where workers sit or squat on the floor throughout the working day." Though the Municipal license forbids a person to work in a loft, many bidi-factories have their employees working in lofts scarcely a few feet from the roof. The lack of ventilation impairs health and the lack of height gives the child labourer a stoop. Children are in great demand in the bidi-factories as their supple fingers are best suited for rolling the dry leaves into bidis. Little children, even as young as 5 or 6 years of age, work from 10 to 12 hours without a weekly rest day. Some times they are bartered by the parents or guardians (at stipulated amounts a month) in return for a loan. So also in the carpet factories at Amritsar and other places and in other industries in the North and South where a considerable number of children under 12 years of age are employed, the practice of pledging the child's labour is quite common.

**Pledging of
Child Labour
Continues
Unabated**

This widespread evil of mortgaging the labour of children in several parts of India has been condemned in no uncertain terms. "This system," asserted the Royal Commission, "is indefensible; it is worse than the system of indentured labour, for the indentured labourer is when he enters the contract, a free agent while the child is not. The State should be justified in adopting strong measures to eradicate this evil." Their recommendation took a practical shape in the Children (Pledging of Labour) Act of 1933. This Act made void any arrangement to pledge the labour of a child under 15 and made both the contracting parties liable to a fine. Any parent or guardian responsible for pledging a child's labour was liable to punishment with a fine extending to Rs. 50/- and employers employing children whose labour has been pledged may be punished with a fine extending to Rs. 200. This Act is practically a dead letter as nothing is done to enforce it and the pledging of children's labour continues to be as prevalent and passes as unnoticed as before the enactment of this legislation.

**A tale of Un-
ashamed
Exploitation**

Mica, shellac, toy-making, paper-flower making and wool cleaning are some of the other unregulated industries where children are exploited in the most shameful manner and on a large scale. About 30% of the workers in mica factories and 10% of the total workers in shellac factories in India are children. These industries being almost entirely out of legal control, little children between 6 and 10 years of age are employed without either age or physical fitness certificate in splitting and cutting mica. In shellac factories children are exposed to excessive heat, while in the Punjab children from 8 years of age are employed in the foul process of wool-cleaning. They inhale the air filled with powdered dust and their faces and bodies are covered with wool-stuff and germ-laden dust. Apart from these shockingly unhealthy conditions in these 'unregulated' factories children working in toy and paper making factories are given additional homework after factory hours. Thus, the employer secures cheap labour which is also free from factory regulations. It is superfluous to describe the effect of such unashamed exploitation on the growth, development and health of the child. One does not have to be a profound thinker to realise the implications of such exploitation on national wealth in terms of man power.

**Acts are
There but
They go
Unimplemen-
ted**

Though the Provincial Governments are given powers to bring smaller establishments employing a minimum of ten persons under legal control, the C. P. Government alone by the C. P. Unregulated Factories Act of 1937 tried to prevent exploitation in shellac manufacture, bidi making and leather tanning. No child under 10 may now be employed in these factories in the C. P. and children between 10 and 14 are required to produce physical fitness certificate. The hours of work are regulated and must fall between 8 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and no child is allowed to work more than 7 hours in the day. Overtime, homework and double employment have also been prohibited in the case of children. Although the Government of India passed the Employment of Children Act in 1938 and by the Amending Act in 1939 prohibited the employment of children under 12 in any workshop connected with bidi making, carpet-weaving, cement manufacture, cloth printing, dyeing and weaving, manufacture of matches, explosives and fire works, mica cutting and splitting, shellac manufacture, tanning and wool-cleaning, and at the same time empowered Provincial Governments to include any others they considered harmful, practically nothing is done to implement the Act or to apply it in the Provinces.

One can now see why it is better for us to beware of making such broad and unfounded assertions as "Child Labour has practically ceased, and the abuses connected with child labour have been almost entirely obliterated. For, the highly boastful advances in factory legislation do not touch even a tiny fraction of the vast army of shamefully exploited child labourers in "unregulated" factories and industries.

The Child Labourer in Non-Industrial Occupations

**Child Labour
that is
Cheaper than
that of the
Beast**

Shocking as the conditions of labour in 'unregulated' factories and small-scale industries are, they are worse still in other non-industrial occupations where the child is treated as anything but a human being in his own right. The child as an agricultural labourer, migratory mason labourer, dock labourer, beast of burden or beast of transport, domestic slave, and as a victim of social vice or immoral traffic leads an animal existence. Nay, as a beast of burden or a beast of transport, his labour is cheaper than that of the beast.

In some of the tanneries the child for carrying water is given two pieces of cloth per year, and as coolie he earns a few annas a day for carrying a burden that is meant to be carried by horses, bullocks or mechanical transport. In the docks, the child is exposed to dangerous fumes, poisonous gases, chemicals, paints, incessant roar of loading and unloading, germ-infested dust, coal dust, chimney soot and a host of other foul influences. And, in order to get a job or to obtain the right of admission into the docks, the child has to pay half of his daily wages to the *Sarang* or the watchman *cum* jobber. Besides these, there are the street trades of paper selling, shoe-shining, peddling etc., where long hours of exposure to all kinds of weather, unwholesome and inadequate meals, excitement of the street, and continuous running about cause such ailments as heart disease, lung infection and stomach disorders in children who are already constitutionally weak.

A story of Human Wreckage

But the physical wreckage of the "Citizen of the Future" is not enough. This sorry picture would not be complete without describing the total mental and moral wreckage of these "future builders of the nation". Children employed in hotels, restaurants, cinemas, brothels, gambling dens, illicit liquor traffic are exposed to the demoralising influence of the foulest characters who teach them to lie, cheat, gamble, use filthy language, commit thefts and generally lead them into a career of vice and delinquency. The child as domestic slave is exposed to grave moral danger just as the child who is traded in for sodomy and prostitution. Little girl servants from 6 to 10 years of age are brought out by employers to large cities and sea-port towns from the villages of Goa, Mangalore, Karwar, Gujarat and other Provinces on a payment of a lump-sum of Rs. 30/- or 40/- to the parents of the child plus the passage and they are made to work from 5 A. M. till 11 P. M. in the homes washing clothes, cleaning utensils, sweeping floors, running errands, looking after babies, assisting in the kitchen, bringing rations etc. If the child who is hardly 6 to 8 years old happens to commit any mistake or offend the mistress, he or she is given a severe thrashing. That is not all. The girl servant is exposed to the danger of being raped by male servants in the house or by neighbouring servants or by relatives of the employer, or by the male employer himself. There are, in the city of

Bombay, agents who bring out children from 6 to 16 years of age from the villages and after getting them employed in the city homes send to the parents of the children Rs. 24/- to 36/- per year according to the ages of the children themselves. If the child refuses to go to a prospective employer, the agent locks up the child in a room without food for three or four days and gives the child a good thrashing until it consents to accept the job.

Other agents import little boys between the ages of 8 and 16 from the villages and district of Sialkot and traffic in them for purposes of sodomy and earn Rs. 5/- to 50/- per night per boy and send the parents in the villages Rs. 10/- to 12/- per month. These victims of sodomy and venereal disease are made to go about as *Champiwallas* or *Masseurs* during the day and at night are made to ply their underworld trade to satisfy the perverted impulses of homosexual adults. Is it any wonder that 50% of the girls and 30 to 35% of the boys admitted to the Remand Home, Bombay, during the years 1942-45 were found to be suffering from venereal disease according to the records of the Bombay Juvenile Court?

No steps are taken either by the Central or the Provincial Governments to prevent the children from entering or from being made to enter these physically and morally dangerous trade and occupations by the traffickers and by the parents and guardians themselves.

**Wages, No
Wages, and
Defrauded
Wages**

As for the wages of children in these occupations that endanger their health and morals, the least said the better. Some boys working in cheap hotels get no wages but only food. While others earn from Rs. 2/- per month to Rs. 10/- per month with food, and still others earn from Rs. 8/- per month to Rs. 15/- per month without food. The dock labourer earns anywhere from twelve annas per day to Rs. 1/6/0 per day but half of his wages are taken away by the *Sarang*. Children in bidi factories are paid two annas to five annas per one thousand bidis, while the child in agricultural labour is often paid in kind only. In the tea plantations the child labourer is paid at the rate of Rs. 5/6/6 per month if he is a settled labourer and Rs. 5/7/5 per month if he is a *Faltu* or *Basti* labourer. The child in migratory mason labour earns about six annas to eight annas per

day as assistant to his parents. The wages of children working in shops, commercial establishments, restaurants and places of amusement again depend upon the individual proprietor of the shop or establishment, as the child is paid either on commission basis, or daily wage basis or monthly wage basis, or is given no wage at all but food and a corner in the shop, restaurant or establishment to sleep in.

**Legislation
Leaves the
Problem
Untouched**

Although the Bombay Legislative Assembly passed the Bombay Shops and Establishments Act in 1939 and similar laws were enacted in the Provinces of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind in 1940, and these Acts were extensively amended in 1943 and 1944, no law has been passed to regulate child labour in street trades and domestic service, though both these are physically and morally dangerous to the child and call for greater protective and restrictive legislation. Even the Shops and Establishments Acts merely regulate hours of work and age-limit for children as in other factory legislation and leave the question of wages of children untouched.

Out-look for the Future

**Not Evils of
Child Labour
but
Child Labour
itself must Go**

Not only is the child labourer hopelessly underpaid and brutally exploited physically and morally, but is entirely deprived of all opportunities for education. The notorious illiteracy and ignorance of our industrial worker is sharply commented upon by the Royal Commission in the following words: "In India, nearly the whole mass of industrial labour is illiterate, a state of affairs which is unknown in any other country of Industrial importance. It is almost impossible to over-estimate the consequences of this disability in wages, in health, in productivity, in organisation and in several other directions". In this age of technocracy and highly mechanised industry, skilled labour and proper educational training are essential for efficiency. The high standard of German and American Industrial efficiency is attributable to the superior scientific and educational training of the German and American worker. But in India this sound far-sighted policy is either not understood or deliberately ignored. The employer or the industrialist in India is not concerned with the child or with national efficiency and vitality or with higher standard and quality of his products. For him human values have no worth. He refuses to recognise the principle that we can increase the efficiency of our

workers not by making the child work during his most precious, formative and developmental period when instruction can most gainfully be imparted, but by keeping him out of the factories and giving him adequate opportunities for vocational training and schooling. It is the task of the Government to eradicate not merely the evils of child labour but child labour itself since it is economically unsound, psychologically disastrous, and physically as well as morally dangerous and harmful. The evil of premature labour and premature exploitation must be wiped out of India if the country is to survive as a strong, healthy, powerful nation. It does not require deep study to realise that child labour deprives children of educational opportunities, minimises their chances for vocational training, stunts their physical growth, hampers their intellectual development, and by forcing them into the army of unskilled labourers or blind-alley jobs condemns them to low wages all their lives. At the same time, it reacts adversely on adult labour since it reduces wages, increases adult unemployment and under-cuts adult-labour. Moreover, the energy and vitality which should help the child attain his adulthood are used up in childhood, thus debarring the possibility of virile manhood. These facts are only too obvious and need no elaboration. In fact, India is only too painfully aware of the pathologic condition of her society. India has been made to feed and to grow fat on empty political cants such as "The children of to-day are the citizens of tomorrow", "The child is the father of the man," and "To-day's children are the nation-builders of to-morrow" etc. But what kind of citizens and nation builders are we going to produce out of this wreckage of the human body, mind, and soul in its early childhood? What is the outlook for the future? Can we even dare speak of the Rights of the Child when we do not even give the child the chance to live or to grow, but sap his very life-blood in his childhood? With such a gloomy and hideous picture of child labour and child exploitation in India can we hope to escape the consequences? Is it not time we grew up a little and discredited all the monstrous rhetorical fustian about the "Citizen of to-morrow" and got down to business to try and build anew from the wreckage of the sacred rights of the child? How shall we do it?

**A Part of
General
Problem
of Social
Welfare**

First of all, it is necessary to realise that the problem of child labour is not a problem in or by itself but is a part of the larger problem of child welfare which is itself part of the still larger problem of social welfare. If our ultimate aim is the elimination of child labour, we would have to go deeper still into the economic problem of the elimination of poverty and starvation. Child labour is due to economic necessity. The family when it is unable to maintain itself above the starvation level, makes its children work for wages outside the home. On the other hand, the wily industrialist, always on the look-out for cheap labour, is only too ready to employ the child, while the public share the responsibility for child labour in that though it does not directly promote child labour, it has been, and still is, apathetic to the evil effects of employment of children. Since the parents of the child labourer are ignorant, illiterate and extremely poor or too over-burdened with debts even to dream of such a thing as the Rights of the Child, and can only think in terms of the child's earning capacity, however small, to supplement the family income, and since the employer is completely immune to all human values except where they concern his own personal profits, there seems to be no other course open than that of compulsion by legislation. It should then be the duty of the Government to use this legal compulsion to free the child from labour and provide him with educational and recreational facilities for the full enjoyment of the rights of childhood. The child should be the first concern of the State, and as such, should be given the greatest protection against detrimental influences of all kinds. The child needs opportunity for growth, not only physical and mental but social and spiritual through all the activities and experiences that rightly belong to childhood. Therefore, it is not enough to take the child out of the factory or out of employment and throw him back into the streets. Together with the elimination of child labour there should be legislation for compulsory, free, universal education and vocational as well as physical training and guidance and a programme of all-sided development of the child. If the Government takes up the movement to prevent child labour seriously, the programme should include the provision of a large number of schools, play-grounds recreational facilities, insistence on compulsory attendance in schools and above

all, reduction of poverty and unemployment of adults. As the problem of child labour is part of the larger problem of social welfare, broad policies of educational and economic reform dealing with adult as well as child welfare must be considered. The community and the public at large should demand such a reorganisation of social and industrial processes as would render child labour unnecessary and unprofitable.

The Crux of the Problem

The fundamental problem seems to be the problem of increasing the family income. If the majority of Indian families were not compelled to live at the poverty and starvation level, child labour would not be necessary. "The most effective way," observes Paul Douglas, "in which society can protect children is in providing their parents with sufficient income so that they can be brought up properly. It is folly to expect wage-earners, with unduly low income, to feed, clothe and rear their children in any adequate fashion. Give a family of average intelligence sufficient money and it will not only be able to take care of its children but it will gradually learn to do so. . . . It is the most cruel form of unconscious hypocrisy for businessmen to pay insufficient wages to those of their employees, who are fathers of families, and then by contributing to child welfare agencies to feel that they have done their duty. The child caring agencies, for all their efforts, cannot remove more than a small fraction of the injury which the children suffer from poverty in their homes. The most pressing obligation is for industry to put its system of wage payment upon an adequate basis and, until this is done, social reform will swim against the tide."

Here we have the crux of the problem, of the paradox of Man's desire for a fuller, richer existence and his own perversity frustrating his own desire. We might almost call it the humour of human inconsistencies. If Man wants to win the fight this time and realise his dream without having to face another tragic failure, he must learn to respect human rights and above all, the rights of childhood in this "Century of the Child", and tackle the entire socio-economic problem on a juster and more humane basis.

STREET GLEANERS OF INDIA

STORY OF AN INVERTED BLACK-MARKET

T. L. A. ACHARYA

"It is difficult not to be indignant when speaking of sweepers and scavengers", Shri Acharya says. He writes of them with passion and anger, quite in step with the growing tide of revolt against age-old social evils and economic abuses. "Our social inability to rehabilitate and reorient this class of useful servant would be in the nature of a disgraceful petition in moral bankruptcy", he concludes, after taking us through the whole gamut of the conditions of life and work of this class of workers, recruited in an "inverted black-market", doubly shunned (shunned by society and shunned by their own class) and condemned to a life of near-animals.

The writer's intention is to draw pointed attention to the demonstrable

lack of an active predisposition on the part of municipal authorities to get down to the job of saving these people from themselves and from the shackles of soul-hurting social ostracism and social and economic degradation—the full story of which cannot be written. One hears of industrial workers (sometimes ‘faintly’ of agricultural workers) as though they alone formed the exploited mass. Sweepers and Scavengers—there are thousands and still thousands of them, whom the forces of social advance have practically by-passed, leaving a horribly depressed sector untouched, a sector that may conceivably draw the whole structure down and that constitutes an ever-present moral challenge to all of us. Will they be freedom’s first charge?

"THIS is so well known that it is not worth talking about"—is, according to Tolstoy, the third phase of the dawning of truth on the consciousness of man. Any way, the Tolstoyan utterance describes beautifully the general attitude of society towards that section of municipal labour which scavenges, sweeps and cleans our towns and cities and makes life livable, which is engaged in a scarcely acknowledged crusade against the primary sources of diseases and epidemics and which, in return, is socially shunned and segregated, criminally under-paid, and very badly or not at all housed.

The very thought makes one Indignant—the best is not good enough for them

It is difficult not to be indignant when speaking of the municipal sweepers and scavengers.

If there is a problem of municipal labour in India it is the problem of affording the squarest deal conceivable to sweepers, scavengers, night-soil cartman and the like. The best is not good enough for them and, with their hands on their hearts, no city fathers in any single town or city in this vast land can say they have honestly stood by and adequately looked after this much-oppressed, woefully neglected and almost sub-human human sector of the civic family.

Farrukhabad in U. P. not long ago, was paying its sweepers Rs. 3/- a month. Not even bidi money!

He is not a "Producer-workman" — Do not bother

They are neglected and the search-light of public attention has not been brought to bear upon their conditions of work and life, in any sustained and desirable manner, perhaps, because, to use Mr. Earnest Bevin's phrase, they are not "producer-workmen" and most indubitably because of the common tendency to take things for granted. The French Economist of the last century, Bastable, once said that those who travelled by a night train in the downy comfort of a first-class sleeper-berth were, more or less, unconscious of the not so, well-paid, army of railway servants who kept sleepless vigil to render its passage smooth and unhindered. The city's streets are swept, the latrines and open drains are cleaned, and that is what matters; there must be somebody who does it—well, why bother?

The supreme fact-social degradation

Seen in this light it causes one considerable intellectual embarrassment to observe that, though ostensibly a fact finding body, the Labour Investigation Committee has

devoted little or no attention to the supreme fact of the degradation of this unignorable part of Indian labour, which should run into some tens of thousands if all municipalities in India were reckoned; the Committee have actually confined their attention to six metropolitan municipalities wherein conditions could not possibly be very bad because of the comparatively greater social awareness of their citizenry and the direct and indirect pressure of organised Unionism.

**Here is an
Inverted
Black-Market**

The problem of sweepers and scavengers is a problem of problems as, whereas in the case of other types of municipal labour such as technicians clerks etc., the conditions of service are likely to be on a level with similar categories in industry actually they are better placed than their compeers in private industry—sweepers and scavengers are recruited from an inverted black-market, a social class artificially depressed and, consequently, under-paid and badly-treated with unashamed impunity.

Private bodies

**Employers
have
criminally
neglected
them**

Such as the Harijan Sevak Sangh have been campaigning for a better deal for these "social lepers" for nearly two decades but an active predisposition to get down to the job has been absent on the part of municipal authorities (elected and unelected) pre-occupied as most of them have been in petty local wrangles, and factional power politics and sometimes in window-dressing their towns with clock towers and swimming-pools and often in re-naming roads and streets and adopting grandiloquent resolutions, riddled with pious hopes and good intentions.

**They said that
ten years ago**

I would better reproduce a circular letter sent out in 1938 by the then General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee Shri J. B. Kripalani, to the Ministers of Local Self-Government in the seven Congress Provinces :

"The joint meeting of the Congress Labour Committee and Congress Ministers and the Parliamentary Secretaries for Labour that met at Calcutta in September last among other things passed the following resolution about improvement of the condition of sweepers.

"This Committee draws the attention of Congress Ministries to the deplorable condition of the sweepers who are engaged by the urban municipalities for cleaning latrines not fitted with flush system and requests them to take prompt and effective measures to improve their conditions of work and wages, *where these are found to be inadequate*".¹

"In this connection we have received a note from Shri A. V. Thakkar of the Harijan Sevak Sangh detailing their various grievances and how they can be remedied.....The note reveals a state of affairs which I am sure Congress Government cannot view with indifference. I am sure you will induce the local bodies to introduce measures that will improve the lot of these unfortunate brothers of ours to whom we owe so much. I do not think the reforms suggested here need any provincial legislation. They can be brought about by executive orders from your department. But if any legislation is necessary that too I hope you will take the earliest opportunity to introduce".

"May I also request you to let this office know what steps have been taken or are contemplated in this matter to enable me to place the information before the Labour Committee and the Working Committee".²

Everything has changed but they are where they were

The last part in the resolution quoted above "*where these are found to be inadequate*", is significant. *Where these are found to be inadequate!!* Where are they adequate? What is the measure of adequacy in relation to their standard of existence? The resolution was adopted ten years ago by representatives of an organisation which was (and is) the spear-head of the liberal forces in the country. The sweepers' and scavengers' "conditions of work and wages" were in all conscience, damnable then; they continue to be damnable after the passage of ten good years of this country's life and history—ten years in which the face of the country has changed beyond recognition, dramatic political events have occurred rocking the country with earth-quake-like

¹ Italics mine.

² Reproduced from a letter dated 7th June 1938 issued to all Harijan Sevaks in India under the signature of Sjt. Shyam Lal, Assistant Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi.

intensity, and social awareness has increased, leaving the untouchable sweeper and scavenger practically untouched. A resolution was adopted and circulated but resolutions cannot break and liquidate vicious circles, age-old prejudice, its social quarantines, hideous but tolerable social evils.

Untouchability within untouchability

"The sweeper class is untouchable even to *Chamars, Dheds, Malas and Madigas* and other classes of so-called higher Harijans. In schools the latter will not allow their children to sit with those of lower Harijans nor will they permit them draw water from the same well. It should be our aim to work in such a way that this distinction between the sweepers and the higher Harijans is done away with. If a school opened in a sweeper mohalla be attended by, or encouraged to be attended by other Harijan children, or a well sunk in a *Chamar* locality be arranged to be thrown open to sweepers by negotiation before it is built, this untouchability within untouchability will disappear after some time. In fact, if special attempts are not made for the removal of this condensed untouchability, it is likely to persist even after the removal of untouchability by the so-called higher-caste Hindus".¹

Social gates still remain barricaded

That is exactly what has happened. Temple gates have been thrown open to Harijans with a lot of newspaper publicity and obstreperous blare of trumpets but "this condensed untouchability" continues. Lower Harijans cannot seek graduation into the class of higher Harijans as their intolerable social conditions continue to be tolerated and basically unchanged. Temple gates are open but the social gates continue to remain barricaded. The country has moved on but their social and economic degradation continues unmitigated. We hear of industrial workers and sometimes, families of agricultural workers but who has heard of sweepers and scavengers.

What are the Facts?

Living conditions

"In many towns sweeper lines are in the close vicinity of public latrines used by thousands of persons.....In other

¹ Extract from Circular No 17 issued by the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi, under the signature of Sjt. A. V. Thakkar, General Secretary.

towns their quarters are surrounded by refuse carts, night-soil carts, sullage carts and such other Municipal conveyances as if they were the proper places for them....."

Bathing and washing facilities in sweepers' colonies are, more or less non-existent in most of the towns; where they do exist, they are so grossly inadequate as to render them just as good as non-existent. A well or a tap is the centre of a never-ceasing pandemonium, a veritable theatre of war.

**They wear
Multi-purpose
clothes**

It is not uncommon to find scavengers and sweepers proceeding to eat their food, without changing the clothes they had worn while cleaning latrines or drains, or driving night-soil or sullage carts. They wash their hands if they can find the water for it. Shocking, beyond measure but not a bit exaggerated. Shocking but what or who is to blame?

**They are the
engineers
of health**

In most of our municipalities they are employees of the Health Department! Their residential areas, their colonies, their lines are themselves in the nature of local plague-spots.

We are all indignant about this state of affairs but our indignation has not been effective as our social lethargy strangulates the social fervour that indignation temporarily engenders in us.

**They are as
bad as the
conditions
in which
they live**

Their living conditions are indescribably bad. We know that man is the child of his environment. Why blame the sweeper and the scavenger for being civilization-proof? Filth exercises a gravitational downward pull—work in filth and life in filth.

Working conditions

**Working con-
ditions are as
bad as
lethargy
can make**

It is not uncommon to see women carrying refuse-baskets on their heads, sometimes metal buckets, where the municipalities are progressive enough to substitute buckets for baskets; it is not uncommon to see latrines being cleaned with odd pieces of tin, picked up any how, held in ungloved naked human hands; it is not uncommon to find gutters and drains being cleaned by men with their feet unshod; it is not at all uncommon to find sweepers and scavengers having to buy their own baskets and brooms; it is not uncommon to find sweepers and scavengers, sweeping and scavenging

with the only garments they possess -their all-purposes garments.

Service conditions

Bribe to get a job and bribe to keep it

(a) *Bribery and exactions*—As in the case of our maritime labour, the door to service as a sweeper or scavenger remains unyielding and un-opened till a bribe has been given or promised to the Jamadar and or the Sanitary Inspector. With the irrepressible hope of better days that sways the human heart men in the lowliest station, the wherewithal for the bribe is borrowed from the money-lender. It does not stop at that—the Jamadar and the Sanitary Inspector, the Jamadar is sometimes the Sanitary Inspector's duly accredited plenipotentiary, collect what is in the nature of an unauthorised poll-tax, called *ghoo* in some places, every month. This is profiteering of the most reprehensible type—your continuity of service depends upon the regularity with which your *ghoo* is paid. Bribe to get a job and bribe to keep it.

Safe-guards against the defenceless

(b) *Imprisonment for absenteeism*—"It has been pointed out that Section 318 of the Madras Municipalities Act 1920, which provides for a punishment of imprisonment extending to two months in the case of scavengers for neglect of, or absence from duty without notice, is unusual and unnecessarily severe that this Section may be amended deleting the provision regarding 'imprisonment'.

'The Government considers that the provisions of Section 318 are intended to provide a safe-guard against sudden strikes in view of the grave dangers to public health which a strike of such employees would involve' 1

What are society's obligations

The scavenger's unauthorised absence is a "grave danger" to public health—he is a servant of public health; a 'safe-guard' is necessary against sudden strikes" and so provision for imprisonment is justified. That is the logic of the above-quoted governmental utterance. But the wages that municipalities generally pay to these servants of public health—they themselves are rarely brought within the ambit of public health activities—the way they are housed, the way they are clothed, the way they are looked after, the

1 Government of Madras, Education and Public Health Department G. O. No. 1768, 29th April 1940 page 2 (v).

way their children are left without schools are—all these constitute a standing disgrace to most municipalities. If a servant of public health is suffered to live in the filth that most sweepers' lines are, is not the community which force him to grovel in that filth the gravest danger to his individual health? What "safe-guards" has he been provided with against the conspiracy of environmental and social conditions that keeps him in conditions of abject degradation? Has society any obligations towards these public health servants or is it a case of one-way traffic?

Imprisonment for absenteeism

There are indetical provisions in other provincial municipal acts with the dice loaded heavily against these much-looted men—palpably one-sided, unnecessarily vindictive, blots on our legislative escutcheon.

(c) *Out-cast by society and out-cast by law*—In spite of their continued service in municipalities over a period of years as sweepers and scavengers, in certain cases such as those of the *Doms* in the U.P. and the *Maghia Doms* in Bihar, they continue to be dubbed as criminal tribes and the civilising provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act restricting their freedom of residence and movement apply with their original rigour. They are servants of public health, operating within a healthful area of Circumscribed Freedom, tied to a few spots, kept in social form by the ever-vigilant eye of the law.

(d) This is what they are paid in some fairly large-sized municipalities in South India where the rigours of untouchability are more intensely felt—a cross-section picture that would be true of the rest of the country.

Municipality		Scale of pay 1941
Dharwar	Road Sweepers (fixed)	Rs. 5/-
	Gutter cleaners (scale)	" 12-1-14
	Bhangis Men	" 15-1-17
	Women (fixed)	" 9/-
Madura	Men	" 11/-
	Women	" 10/-

Municipality		Scale of pay 1941	
Madras ¹	Conservancy Staff	Men ...	Rs. 17½—½—20
		Women ...	„ 13½—½—16
		Boys ...	„ 6—½—9
Belgaum	Mahars	Men ...	„ 12/-
		Women ...	„ 11/-
	Bhangis	Men ...	„ 14/-
		Women ...	„ 12|8/-
(an allowance of Rs. 6/- for a team of 24 Male Bhangis, i.e. <i>Four Annas</i> per head per month is admissible when they are detailed for out, on night-soil lorries)			
Tuticorin	Men ...	„ 11|8/-	
	Women ...	„ 9|8/-	
Tanjore	Sweepers ...	„ 9/-	
	Scavengers ...	„ 11/-	
Hubli	Part-time sweepers	„ 2|8/-	
	Full-time sweepers	Men ...	„ 13/-
		Women ...	„ 11/-
	Bhangis (Special)	Men ...	„ 15/-
		Women ...	„ 13/-
	Bhangis (General)	Men ...	„ 13—1—6
Women ...		„ 13/-	
Vellore	Sweepers	„ 10|8/-	
	Scavengers	Men ...	„ 12|8/-
		Women ...	„ 12/-
	Gutter cleaners	„ 11|8/-	
	Cart drivers Municipal carts & bullocks...	„ 13/-	
Bezwada	Sweepers	„ 10 & 11	
	Scavengers and cart drivers	„ 12/- 2	

May conceivably be much worse in the North

I cannot produce a similar picture for the North of India but the one of the above figures would more or less fit in

¹The wages, according to Rege Committee Report remain unchanged.

²All the figures are authentic supplied as they were by the Commissioner's of the respective municipalities in 1941 in response to a Questionnaire sent out by the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Bangalore.

anywhere in India, specially in the case of fairly large-sized towns. I think in some of the Northern Indian towns conditions are much more dismal—much more dismal means intolerably more inhuman.

Cawnpore may be taken as a sample

Assistant Jamadar	...	Rs. 12—1—8
Road Sweepers & scavengers		
(Men)	...	Rs. 10— $\frac{1}{2}$ —12 $\frac{1}{2}$ + 25%
Road Sweepers (Women)	...	Rs. 9— $\frac{1}{2}$ —11 $\frac{1}{2}$ + 25%

If Farukhabad is any sign, when the tale of the smaller municipalities with their petty resources comes to be told, presents a terrible and horrifying spectacle of exploitation of man by man.

Other conditions and amenities

Why not give them two days off?

It looks as though sweepers and scavengers nowhere get a full weekly rest day; half-a-day off appears to be the general rule. If seven persons were employed to do the work of six, each could be given a weekly rest day. I personally think they should have two days off, if the nature of work is the measuring-rod of the rest and the untainted fresh air they require.

Mostly they are treated as temporary servants. In some cases, when they go on leave, they themselves have to find and provide substitutes. Some municipalities have let sweepers and scavengers in for the benefit of their Provident Fund Schemes and though law does not enjoin it, to maternity benefits. Privilege and casual leave benefits do not exist. Dearness allowance on a niggardly scale is given.

Give it with one hand and wrest with another

Retirement Benefits are not very common but where they exist they are grudging and hedged and hamstrung with all sorts of restrictive clauses and conditions. The Madras Corporations's Revised Regulations for the grant of extraordinary gratuities to the heirs of deceased employees and of bonus to labourers on retirement as approved by Government in G.O. No. Ms 4942 L. & M., dated 22—12—1931 and G.O. No. Ms. 3486 L. AD., dated 5—9—1939 speaks of:—

“Gratuity—The Corporation does not bind itself to grant gratuity in every case. It will, however, be prepared to

1 Regg Committee report on Municipal Labour.

consider claims for gratuities in extraordinary and deserving cases, applied for by legal heirs within six months from the date of demise of the Corporation employees. Such claims will be considered on individual merits and will be regulated by:—

- (1) The character and service of the deceased
- (2) The condition under which the deceased met with death and
- (3) The pecuniary circumstances and prospects of the claimant.

“*Bonus* - Bonus cannot be claimed as a matter of right...”

**You did not
bother when
he was alive**

The psychology and the social approach behind these regulations are worthy of study! The Corporation does not *bind* itself, well, to anything; but the man is *bound* to his job and *bound* to go to jail for two months if he stayed away even for understandable human circumstances. Speaking of sweepers and scavengers, which case is not “extraordinary and deserving?” The “character” of the deceased! His character and the formative influences that affected his character, the social conditions that warped his mind and ruined his character, the exploitation that stunted his outlook and shrunk his soul, the social ostracism that imprisoned him and clipped the wings of his character—these were nobody’s concern when the man was alive. More dead than alive; when he is duly and properly certified to be really dead his character comes under the microscope for detailed examination, for a retrospective post-mortem. Condemned to an artificially and shamelessly imposed social troglodytic existence in a manner of speaking, in death, his character suddenly emerges as the desideratum for certain benefits that while living he was not entitled. They want to know now whether he died, drunk or sober and whether the pecuniary circumstances of his rightful heirs are as bad as his were before he died.

**What gives a
man his title
to considera-
tion?**

What is the social content of the so-called privileges and benefits, the social philosophy that inspires the social approach? The service our sweepers and scavengers render to the community cannot be measured in terms of money, and if the social worth of a man’s service is his sovereign title to a square deal, they should at least be given greater consideration than what we unthinkingly give to some classes of social parasites,

A Petition in moral Bankruptcy

Our social inability to rehabilitate and reorient this class of useful servants would be in the nature of a disgraceful petition in moral bankruptcy. The point is, there are so many thousands and thousands of them living in a sort of a "No man's Land," a sort of dim twilighty existence.

We must start working from the bottom upwards

The late Professor Green of Oxford held that a new aspirant to parliamentary honours should be debarred from standing as a candidate in an election if he did not possess to his credit some dependable experience of local democracy, say as a member of a County Council. A well-known Mysorean Playwright, Late T. P. Kailasam avers that municipal councillors, our city fathers and city mothers should, by law, be compelled to reside in the worst, the slummiest of localities, charged with the task of clearing-up the accumulated and unholy towns and cities. There is something fundamentally sound behind the two thoughts. What you need is a clean-up right from the very foundation of things. A well-integrated bundle or piecing together of primary tasks would and should at any time represent the picture of a national drive for a forward social move. The national tempo of social progress is the sum-total of the tempoes of individual and group efforts at social amelioration, galvanised and held together by an all-embracing central inspiration.

Other than the best is just no good

There is something patently wrong with the whole approach when a municipal commissioner tells you, as one has actually done, that the wages of his sweepers and scavengers are in the neighbourhood of Rs. 11/- to Rs. 12/-, that their economic condition is "*fairly good*" and that they are more or less happy living as they do "in pucca field houses built by themselves on a nice slopy hillock." Fairly good! Anything other than the best is just no good.

Will the sweeper and scavenger be freedom's first charge? The full story of their degradation *cannot be written.*

SECTION IV
STATE & LABOUR

Contributors

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar
V. V. Giri
T. L. A. Acharya
Sir Wilfrid Garrett
A Factory Inspector
A. B. Crawford
Dr. M. N. Rao
Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee
Dr. N. S. R. Sastry

LABOUR AND THE CONSTITUTION

B. R. AMBEDKAR

Minister for Law, Government of India

An accredited champion of the under-dog and the oppressed all his life, the Hon'ble Dr. B. R. Ambedkar knows what labour wants and what type of a set-up has in it to enthrone labour in the seat of social honour and power that is its right by virtue of its contribution to the life of a civilised community.

Dr. Ambedkar charges the present labour leadership in India, with failure to rise to the sterling opportunity that the Time Spirit has placed in its hands, opportunity to demand a Constitution which would be a "politico--socio-economic" instrument, all in one, a charter of a new economic structure of society, an engineer of the emancipation of the working-class.

"Has Indian Labour done so?" Dr. Ambedkar asks. "Is Indian labour

aware that there is a way out? To both these questions the answer must be in the negative. Labour Leadership whether Socialist or Communist has taken no notice of this problem and has not even taken care to use this opportunity for getting the Constituent Assembly to consider the problem. Can there be a greater discredit on Labour Leadership in India ?”

Things are fluid, in a state of flux ; a new structure is being pieced together ; but labour’s voice is not being heard at all. The profound chance of hammering out a system of society friendly to labour, without having to go through the fiery ordeal of struggle and tribulation, has been allowed to slip through labour’s fingers.

Assurance of Individual Liberty is an ineffective insulation against economic and social exploitation. That is the object-lesson of history. Political Democracy under a constitution, which does not stipulate the shape of the socio-economic pattern, has not prevented exploitation of the economically weak by the economically powerful ; the economically powerful have a way of making so-called individual liberty a mere travesty, if the constitution leaves “ the fulfilment of a fundamental purpose ” to the whimsicalities of majority rule or ordinary law. Labour needs equality and liberty and a constitution which balances both and makes both meaningful and real.

Though under the Constitution which is on the anvil “ a calamitous situation ” for Labour is sought to be obviated in that the Union Centre’s “ executive authority shall be co-extensive with its Legislative authority ”, it is not sufficient to safeguard Labour’s interests and Labour has thrown away a tremendous chance.

FROM the point of view of Labour there are two ways of looking at the Constitution which is on the anvil. The first *relates* to the form of the Constitution and the second to the nature of the Constitution.

How Labour is placed under Federal Constitution

As to the form of the Constitution the Indian Constitution would be Federal. A Federal Constitution always tends to create difficulties in the way of Labour. Labour needs two things. It needs that Labour Laws should be uniform throughout the State. It needs that the State should be in a position to implement all International Labour Agreements throughout the territory of the State. In a Federal Constitution it does not become possible for Labour to achieve these two aims. For it is possible that in devising a Federal Constitution Labour may be made a provincial subject. In such an event each Province being free to make such Labour Laws as it likes, there can be no uniformity in Labour Legislation. The Centre not being empowered to pass Labour Legislation, it has not executive authority in Labour matters and, consequently, it cannot give effect to any international agreements relating to Labour.

Government of India Act, 1935 had a novel feature—Concurrent List

The Indian Constitution as embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, was a Federal Constitution. But it had very skilfully avoided the difficulties under which Labour is placed under a Federal Constitution. It had done so by introducing into the Constitution the novel feature called concurrent list. Ordinarily, in a Federal Constitution the subjects for Legislation and Administration are divided into two lists (1) *Central* and (2) *Provincial*. Over the former, Central Legislature has exclusive authority and over the latter the Provincial Legislature has exclusive authority.

The Government of India Act 1935 had introduced a third list called the concurrent list and Labour Legislation was among the other subjects included in it. The concurrent list was a list of subjects over which both the Central and Provincial Legislatures had the authority to legislate. The result was that notwithstanding the federal character of the Constitution, notwithstanding that Labour was Provincial, Labour remained a Central Subject under the Constitution embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935. Labour

could achieve its two purposes, namely, uniformity of Legislation and implementation of International Agreements.

Under the New Constitution in the making-Labour has Escaped a Calamitous Situation

Labour would have been placed in complete danger if the constitutional plan prescribed in the statement of the Cabinet Mission of May 16th, 1946, had been accepted. Under that scheme, Labour was to be an exclusively Provincial Subject. The Centre was shorn of every vestige of authority over Labour. Fortunately for Labour that plan has become extinct. A new plan called the plan of June 3, 1947, has taken the field. The new Constitution that is being framed under this plan is free from all the limitations imposed upon the authority of the Centre by the plan of May 16, 1946. By the new plan, Labour has escaped a most calamitous situation in which there could have been neither uniformity of Legislation nor international solidarity. For it has not been possible for the makers of new Constitutions to revert to the peculiar type of Federal Plan accompanied by a concurrent list which was a special feature of the Government of India Act, 1935. The new Constitution from the point of view of Labour will even be better than the Government of India Act 1935. From the point of view of Labour, the provisions of the Government of India Act suffered from one defect. It lay in the provision that so far as the concurrent list was concerned the Central Government could make laws. But it had no power to execute its laws by its own machinery. For the execution of its Labour Laws it had to depend upon the Provincial Governments. The new Constitution is based upon the principle that the Executive Authority of the Central Government shall be *co-extensive* with its Legislative Authority. This means that the Central Government will have the authority not merely to make laws but will have the authority to administer them.

II

Should it be a mere Political Constitution or a Politico-Socio-Economic Constitution?

What is the nature of this Indian Constitution which is on the anvil? This of course raises another question: What should be the nature of the Constitution? Should it be a constitution which should prescribe the political structure of the society or should it go further and prescribe the social and economic structure of the society as well? A constitution which is purely political stops with prescribing the various organs of the State, namely, of the Legislature,

the Executive and the Judiciary—their inter-relations, the franchise, recruitment to public services and frequency of election to the legislatures. A constitution which is politico-socio-economic, besides prescribing the nature of the various organs of the State also proceeds to prescribe a particular form of an economic organisation of the society. That is to say, it prescribes the ownership and the management of the instruments of production and the distribution of the income among members of the society.

The Russian Constitution Broke New Ground

Before the Russian Constitution came into existence such a distinction would have been inconceivable, for prior to the inauguration of the Russian Constitution, the Constitutions of all countries were purely political in their scope. They prescribed the various organs of the State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, their inter-relations, the life of the Legislature, the Franchise, appointment to public services and matters of an analogous character. They did not prescribe any particular form of the Economic Organisation of Society. This was left to be determined by the free forces, social and economic, operating in Society. The Russian Constitution makes a departure. It not only prescribes in its Constitution the political structure for the Russian Society, but also prescribes in its Constitution the Economic Structure for the Russian Society.

The issue whether the Constitution should merely be an instrument prescribing the political structure of society or whether it should be an instrument which should prescribe the shape of economic life is both a question of principle as well as a matter of controversy.

Those who hold the view that a Constitution should be no more than an instrument prescribing the political structure of society rely on two arguments :

Their first argument is the preservation of Individual Liberty. The Constitution not only guarantees Liberty, but its prime function is to guarantee it. For a Constitution to prescribe the shape of economic life of society is to take away the liberty of the individual. Constitution cannot do both, for as an instrument prescribing the economic structure of society it would very directly destroy what as an instrument prescribing the political structure of society it purports to do.

Safeguarding of Individual Liberty

That this argument defeats itself is beyond doubt. The following considerations will demonstrate the proposition. The argument that the Constitution should not prescribe the economic shape of society and, if it does so, it would destroy individual liberty is a fallacious argument. *Indeed, the safeguarding of individual liberty requires that the Constitution should prescribe the economic shape of society.*

The Fundamentals of Political Democracy

Political Democracy rests on four premises which may be set out in the following terms : —

- (1) That the individual is an end in himself.
- (2) That the individual has certain inalienable rights which must be guaranteed to him by the Constitution.
- (3) That the individual shall not be required to relinquish any of his constitutional rights as a condition precedent to the receipt of a privilege.
- (4) That the State shall not delegate powers to private persons to govern others.

Any one who studies the working of the system of social economy based on private enterprise and pursuit of personal gain will realise how it undermines, if it does not actually violate, the last two premises on which Democracy rests. How many have to relinquish their liberty in order to gain their living? How many have to subject themselves to be governed by private employers?

What does Individual Liberty Mean to the Unemployed

Ask those who are unemployed whether their Liberty is of any value to them. If a person who is unemployed is offered a choice between a job of some sort, with some sort of wages, with no fixed hours of labour and with an interdict on joining a union and the exercise of his right to freedom of speech, association, religion, etc., can there be any doubt as to what his choice will be. How can it be otherwise? The fear of starvation, the fear of losing savings, if any, the fear of being compelled to take children away from school, the fear of having to be a burden on public charity, the fear of having to be burned or buried at public cost are factors too strong to permit a man to stand out for his fundamental rights. The unemployed are thus compelled to relinquish their fundamental rights for the sake of securing the privilege to work and to subsist.

liberty from
the Control of
the State
results in
Dictatorship
of the Private
Employer

What about those who are employed? Constitutional lawyers assume that the enactment of Fundamental Rights is enough to safeguard their liberty and that nothing more is called for. They argue that where the State refrains from intervention in private affairs—economic and social—the residue is liberty. What is necessary is to make the residue as large as possible and State intervention as small as possible. It is true that where the State refrains from intervention what remains is liberty. But this does not dispose of the matter. The question still remains to be answered: To whom and for whom is this liberty? Obviously, this liberty is liberty to the landlords to increase rents, for capitalists to increase hours of work and reduce rates of wages. This must be so. It cannot be otherwise. For in an economic system employing armies of workers, producing goods *enmasse* at regular intervals, some one must make rules so that workers will work and the wheels of industry run on. If the State does not do it the private employer will. Life otherwise will become impossible. In other words, what is called liberty from the control of the State is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer.

The second argument relied upon in support of the contention that the Constitution should not prescribe the economic structure of society is that it is unnecessary to do so. It is said that where there is Parliamentary Democracy based on adult suffrage it is open to people to make laws and to give the economic structure of Society the shape the majority of people wish to give. Why do by Constitution what people can do by their ordinary law?

Fulfilment of a
Fundamental
Purpose can-
not be left to
the Mercies
of Majority
Rule

The reason why it cannot be left to ordinary law is not difficult to understand. One essential condition for the success of a planned economy is that it must not be liable to suspension or abandonment. It must be permanent. The question is how this permanence can be secured. Obviously, it cannot be secured under the form of Government called Parliamentary Democracy. Under the system of Parliamentary Democracy the policy of the Legislature and of the Executive is the policy of the majority for the time being. Under the system of Parliamentary Democracy the majority in one election may be in favour of State Socialism in Industry and Culture. At the next election the majority may be against it. The anti-State-Socialism majority will

use its law-making power to undoing the work of the pro-State-Socialism majority and the pro-State-Socialism will use its law-making power to doing over again what has been undone by their opponents. Those who want the economic structure of society to be modelled on State-Socialism must realize that they cannot leave the fulfilment of so fundamental a purpose to the exigencies of ordinary law which simple majorities -whose political fortunes are never determined by rational causes -have a right to make and unmake. For these reasons Political Democracy seems to be unsuited for the purpose.

**Labour must
Have Liberty
and Equality
and a Consti-
tution which
Balances
Both**

The case in support of the proposition that the Constitution should prescribe the economic structure of Society is therefore beyond dispute. The only question that remains is what should be the form of the economic structure. There are altogether three alternatives to chose from

- (a) Capitalism
- (b) Socialism and
- (c) Communism

What should be the choice of Labour? Labour cannot choose Capitalism. By choosing Capitalism, Labour will lose Liberty. For under Capitalism the only remedy Labour has against being cheated out of these fundamental rights to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness is, the useful remedy adopted by Democratic countries to limit the power of Government to impose arbitrary restraint in the political domain and to invoke the ordinary power of the legislature to restrain the more powerful individual from imposing arbitrary restraints on the less powerful in the economic field. The malequacy, nay, the futility of the plan, has been well established. The successful invocation by the less powerful of the authority of the Legislature is a doubtful proposition. Having regard to the fact that even under adult suffrage all Legislatures and Governments are controlled by the more powerful an appeal to the Legislature to intervene is a very precarious safeguard against the invasion of the liberty of the less powerful. Labour's plan to safeguard its own interest must be quite different. It cannot be content with a plan which merely seeks to limit not only the power of Government to impose arbitrary restraints but also of the more powerful individuals or, to be more precise, to eliminate the possibility of

the more powerful having the power to impose arbitrary restraints on the less powerful by withdrawing from the control it has over the economic life of the people. There cannot be the slightest doubt that it must forge a plan which will not let one individual have power over the lives and actions of other individuals. Can Labour choose Communism? I think it cannot. For under Communism, workers may get equality with the erstwhile class of owners but they are sure to lose their rights to Liberty. It may be that Communism destroys the division between the rich and the poor. It may be that Communism deprives the owner of the power to control the life of the worker. But it also deprives the worker of his liberty to do what he likes with his own. There is no question that Labour not only needs equality, it also needs liberty. Indeed, a system under which Labour had equality without liberty would be both intolerable as well as deadening. Labour must have both equality as well as liberty and a Constitution which balances both can be the only ideal Constitution from the point of view of Labour. In other words, the economic structure of society which would serve the interests of Labour best is Socialism.

Labour Leadership in India has Failed to Rise to the Opportunity and Failed in its Duty

What sort of an economic structure Labour should choose is, however, not the main issue. The main issue is whether Labour should seek a Constitution which is merely a political instrument or whether Labour should insist that the Constitution should also be an economic instrument. If Indian Labour desires that it should not have to undergo misery, trials and tribulations and struggles to win its freedom from the despotism of the owning class, Indian Labour must insist that the Indian Constitution must not merely be a political instrument but must also be an economic instrument. Has Indian Labour done so? Is Indian Labour aware that there is a way out? To both these questions the answer must be in the negative. Labour Leadership in India whether Socialist or Communist has taken no notice of this problem and has not even taken care to use this opportunity for getting the Constituent Assembly to consider this problem. Can there be a greater discredit on Labour Leadership in India.

CLAMANT NEED FOR FORWARD LABOUR LEGISLATION IN INDIA

V. V. GIRI, Bar-At-Law

Representative of the Government of India in Ceylon

With his experience of labour problems as a Trade Unionist of over a quarter-of-a-century's standing and his knowledge of labour conditions in the country acquired as a leader of labour and as a Minister for Labour, Shri V. V. Giri has it in him to speak with an authentic voice and must be heard.

"The dawn of independence and the introduction of adult suffrage will lead India towards a Socialist Democracy at no distant date," is his belief and towards the achievement of this consummation it is the duty of the State "to push on at the earliest possible opportunity legislation relating to amelioration of labour conditions so that

the masses may realise that political emancipation is but a step towards complete economic salvation of the country”.

Shri Giri welcomes the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference of the I.L.O. as that would be the harbinger and an engineer of a New Deal for Asian Labour. He wants planned legislation but there should be no delay ; the whole gamut of the workers' life should be brought within the range of forward labour legislation within a five years' time on the outside, labour legislation designed to afford workers a new status and a new civic dignity, facilitates to organise themselves in preparation for the advent of a socialist democracy. Towards this end and as a first step, Shri Giri projects a fourteen-pronged programme of Social Legislation. '

**A Disciplined
Workers'
Organisation
is a Condition
Precedent**

LABOUR legislation in India is of recent origin. Labour laws have not come into being in any country merely through the goodwill of governments and employers except perhaps in Soviet Russia which is under the dictatorship of the proletariat where classes do not seem to exist. Workers have to rely on themselves to create strong public opinion in their favour. Therefore for a well-knit labour legislation of a type suitable to any country, the condition precedent is a strong and disciplined organisation of workers.

**Internal
Machinery to
Conserve
Industrial
Peace**

The presence of good trade unions representing the majority of workers in industry will automatically lead to agreements on matters relating to conditions of their service. Internal settlement of trade disputes is to be preferred to external settlement, be it by government or by any machinery established under its authority. The agreements arrived at by the aid of an internal machinery, i. e., by representatives of workers' organisations and those of employers sitting across the table will be of a more abiding character. Thus if only, in the first instance, conventions are created with regard to many fundamental issues that arise between capital and labour in any undertaking and, later, if those conventions are acted upon on the basis of mutual trust between the parties, it becomes most easy thereafter for governments to grant formal recognition and clothe them in legislative form. As instances to the point, if governments are able to influence employers to grant recognition to Trade Unions or if the respective organisations come to an understanding on the question of holidays with pay or the introduction of social security measures or on the principles on which living wages or other conditions of service have to be fixed, labour legislation at a later stage will not only be possible and practicable but can be successfully worked with the general consent of the partners in industry, namely, capital and labour.

The formation of industrial councils, fully representative of employers' and workers' interests in an industry and those brought into existence by a central government wherein the interests of all industries can be represented will be of great value in assessing the requirements for the amelioration of the workers' conditions.

**Workers must
be Treated
as Free Men
and not
Wage-Slaves**

Out of the total population of nearly 400 millions in India there are about 6 million workers in organised industries and about 30 million in the unorganised ones and with the plans of industrialisation we are contemplating with the dawn of independence, the numbers will rise to greater proportions. It is an admitted fact that in India the conditions of industrial labour are very much backward almost in every respect when compared to those in other countries. The wages are low, the hours of work are long, the housing conditions are inadequate and unsatisfactory, educational facilities are meagre and there is hardly any system of insurance against unemployment, sickness or old age. All these defects must be remedied by improving their conditions of life and work so as to enable the working classes of this country to lead an ordinarily decent life. The efficiency of an industry must be judged not only by the quality of cheapness of its products, but also primarily by the conditions in which the industry is able to maintain its labour force. Industrial strife and class war are very likely to be accentuated in a system in which labour conditions are determined according to the law of demand and supply. If a national plan for developing industries is to succeed, workers engaged in industrial work must be given such conditions as will place them in a position to devote to their work all the intelligence, physical skill, energy and enthusiasm they possess so that their work will be efficient and output of their production both in quality and quantity will be the highest. Under the present industrial system in which those only who invest capital in the country control it fully, two of the greatest fears of the workers are that to the extent they improve their efficiency and production, they stand the risk of unemployment. As in politics, 'good government is not a substitute for self-government', so in the industrial system, besides providing good conditions of work, workers also require the higher satisfaction that by doing their work well they are rendering service to the community not as slaves to the system but as free men. They must be made to feel a degree of control in the conduct of the industrial system.

**Historical
Survey of
Labour
Legislation
in India**

Within the past three quarters of a century, labour legislation made some progress in India. Although it began with the indenture system which is now abolished, Indian legislation has also regulated free labour in factories since the

early eighties and has extended its scope to include labour conditions in other organised and semi-organised industries.

It is not proposed in this short review of labour legislation to go into the details of various enactments passed in this period but merely give a brief historical background with suggestions for the future.

Labour legislation in India began in the middle of the last century. The progress made until the inauguration of the I.L.O. in 1919 was rather slow. Some of the most important legislative measures including amendments and enactments were undertaken only after the Royal Commission on Labour made its report in 1931. The origins of the different legislative measures may be dated as follows:—

1. Labour under penal sanction in 1939;
2. Assam Emigrant Labour in 1863;
3. Factory Labour in 1881;
4. Mining Labour in 1901;
5. Dock Labour in 1923;
6. Labour on board ship 1923;
7. Workmen's Compensation in 1923;
8. Trade Union in 1926;
9. Trade disputes in 1929;
10. Maternity benefit in 1929;
11. Railway Labour in 1930;
12. Protection of Wages in 1936;
13. Recognition for the settlement of Trade Disputes in 1945.

There were other provincial legislative measures regarding shop assistants, unregulated factories, maternity benefits etc., which were passed either during the existence of Congress Governments between 1937-39 or during the present period.

**The I.L.O.
gave a fillip to
Legislation in
all Countries**

The International Labour Organisation has done a great deal to encourage nations taking up labour legislation in right earnest. It was responsible for the passing of many conventions and recommendations which related to: (1) the regulation of hours of work including establishment of maximum working day and week; (2) the regulation of labour supply; (3) the prevention of unemployment; (4) the provision of an adequate living wage; (5) the protection of

workers against sickness, disease and injury arising out of their employment; (6) the protection of children, young persons and women; (7) the provisions for old age and injury; (8) the protection of the interests of the workers when employed in countries other than their own; (9) the recognition of the freedom of association; (10) the organisation of occational technical education; etc.

The Asian Conference will set a New Movement Afoot

Recommendations cover subjects mentioned above and include workers in different occupations, industry, agriculture, transport, etc. It is in the interests of the workers, specially of Asia, that it is considered desirable to have an Asian Labour Conference this year and this will not only enthuse nations in Asia to improve the conditions of the working classes but will also give an opportunity to the leaders of the working class in Asia to meet and exchange information.

You must Do it all in Five Years

If labour legislation is to be planned, it is necessary to fix the period within which the plan may be carried out as the labour legislation in India is backward and the need for progress is very urgent. The period within which the plan may be carried out must be short and should not exceed 5 years. This has also been agreed to at one of the recent meetings of the Tripartite Labour Conferences held at Delhi.

Essential Lines of Attack

It is now proposed to offer some suggestions regarding immediate labour legislation relating to some of the urgent requirements of working class :

(1) *Wages* —All efforts should be made to put into operation a policy of standardized wages. A comprehensive system of minimum wages should be evolved speedily. The first steps in this direction should be immediately taken up by constituting statutory Trade Boards or Wages Councils for industrial establishments covered by the Factory Act or by the Payment of Wages Act and other industrial concerns of importance such as mines, plantations, shipping etc. Similar Boards should be constituted to fix minimum wages for all manual workers employed by governments, municipalities and other local bodies.

(2) *Hours of work* . -The limit of working hours should be placed at 48 per week and 8 per day in the case of workers in factories. Un-regulated industrial undertakings are needed

to be regulated—mines, docks, shipping, both maritime and inland, and on railways, bus services, plantations as also building work in bigger towns and cities.

(3) *Unregulated industrial undertakings*—The Factories Act should be amended so as to make its provisions applicable to industrial establishments engaging 5 or more workers and using mechanical power. Its scope should be widened by bringing under its regulations all industrial undertakings employing ten or more persons even without mechanical power.

(4) *Plantations*—The plantation industry is one of the biggest organised industries in India, judged by the capital invested, value of production and the number of persons employed. As remarked by the Royal Commission on Labour, the plantation represents the development of agricultural resources of tropical countries in accordance with the methods of western industrialism.

Matters relating to conditions of work, freedom of association, wages and earnings, housing, medical attendance, and maternity benefits, clothing, water supply, holidays, social welfare etc., require radical improvements before the workers engaged in that industry can be declared to be reasonably happy. From the year 1937, ever since the Congress Governments came into existence in the provinces, enquiries were instituted regarding conditions of work in the plantations. Later the Tripartite Labour Conferences made a further advance and the late Interim Government at the Centre called for a special conference of the representatives of employers, workers and provincial and central governments to deal with all these questions. Repatriation of plantation workers should be made more easy.

(5) *Seamen*—An employment bureau should be set up in each major port in India and recruitment of seamen should be made only through such bureaux. The work of the bureau should be administered by persons having practical maritime experience. But a Committee consisting of an equal number of members of ship-owners and *seamen* should be appointed to advise on all matters concerning the work of the bureau. Accommodation to seamen on board ships should be more adequate and definite rules regarding the

standard of accommodation should be laid down. The existing provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act in this respect must be suitably amended. In the matter of food for seamen, specific rules regarding the quality and quantity of catables to be supplied should be framed with a view to ensure to seamen the supply of adequate and regular meals on board the ships. The existing discrimination in the scales of compensation between the Indian and European seamen should be removed by raising the compensation admissible to Indian seamen. In the case of inland navigation the recruitment of the crew should be made through a joint board consisting of an equal number of representatives of employers and workers.

(6) *Dock workers*—Each major port in India should have a register of all workers who have a genuine claim to be regarded as dock labourers. The system of registration should be supervised and controlled by the Port Authorities assisted by the representatives of ship-owners, stevedores and labourers.

(7) *Building workers*—The convention regarding building workers passed by the I.L.O. in 1937 prescribing certain general safety rules should be immediately ratified by the Government of India.

(8) *Housing*—The responsibility for providing adequate housing accommodation to the industrial workers should be taken over by the State or by the municipalities and Local Boards subsidised, if necessary, by Government for this purpose. On principle, the system of employers providing housing accommodation to the industrial workers is undesirable. In the meantime, steps should be taken immediately to improve the existing housing conditions both as regards the minimum standards of conveniences and as regards rent. Rent should be so restricted as to enable the worker to secure adequate accommodation within 10 per cent of his earnings. The site for any new industry should not be chosen unless it is found suitable from the point of view of industrial housing. A careful survey of the prospective industrial area should be made with a view to ascertaining the possibility of making available to the workers adequate housing accommodation as soon as the industries are started.

(9) *Holidays with pay*--Workers in industries should be guaranteed at least 15 working days as paid holidays after 12 months' service exclusive of public holidays.

(10) *Social Insurance* --A compulsory, unified and State controlled system of social insurance for industrial workers should be evolved as soon as possible. The risk for the present covered should be sickness, invalidity, old age or death, involuntary unemployment, accident (Workmen's Compensation) etc. It has already been considered by the Tripartite Conference and a draft Bill is being made ready by the Government of India.

(11) *Education*--A nation-wide campaign for adult literacy and education should be started by making it obligatory on every illiterate adult to attend a school for a fixed period. The necessary finances required for launching this campaign should be provided by the government.

(12) *Child labour*--The minimum age of employment of children should be raised from 12 to at least 14, preferably 15.

(13) *Health and safety*--Safety regulations in factories should be more strictly enforced and amended where necessary. Safety provisions of the Factory Act should be extended to non-regulated factories as recommended by the Royal Commission.

Legislation to ensure improvement in sanitation and hygiene in mines should be immediately undertaken. Safety provisions of the Indian Mines Act should also be strengthened. The same should be done with respect to the Docks and the Indian Dock Labourers' Act 34 amended suitably. A special committee should be appointed to make detailed investigations and recommendations with respect to health and safety of the workers.

(14) *Labour statistics*--What is more important is the establishment of a bureau of labour statistics by the Central Government. It should be the fact-finding organisation of the Ministry of Labour in the Central or Federal Government for the development of labour policy for the whole country. It should have various functions, viz., (i) it should summarise and publish the labour statistics of provincial

governments ; (ii) it should unify and consolidate the work of labour bureaux and control the collection of material and the publication of the data ; and (iii) it should initiate labour research on important subjects and in particular localities, and also encourage research by private institutions or persons whenever feasible. This function is partially discharged at present by the Intelligence Department of the Central Government. But with the establishment of Provincial Autonomy and with the concurrent power in most phases of labour legislation, the provinces are liable to take divergent methods of collecting and publishing their data, unless there is established a unifying system under the control of the Federal Government. Moreover, legislation is also needed by the Federal Government to enable the competent authorities to collect material and to preserve uniformity in all such collections of provincial governments.

The dawn of independence and the introduction of adult suffrage will lead India towards a socialist democracy at no distant date. It is confidently expected that the Independent Union of India with a "Government of the people, for the people, by the people," as its fundamental basis will push on at the earliest possible opportunity legislation relating to amelioration of labour conditions so that the masses may realise that political emancipation is but a step towards complete salvation of the country.

DON'T PUNISH THE ABSENTEE BUT RECREATE SOCIETY

A PROBLEM IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC
APPROACH

T. L. A. ACHARYA

Shri T. L. A. Acharya seeks to bring a fresh approach to bear on the problem of industrial absenteeism, arguing that punishment being utterly negative does not eradicate the social disease of which absenteeism is a manifest symptom. Obsolescent methods, administrative obscurantism and out-moded values cloud the main problem. There are no short-cuts, there is no short-term solution. The problem is as big as a reorientation of the present socio-economic set-up. "Give him a whole-hearted sense of being wanted", treat him as a human person, feed him, house him, give him a proper atmosphere to breathe and work in, make him more than a mere paper partner in industry and the absentee will be your man. Absenteeism is wrong but the conditions that foster absenteeism are very very wrong.

**Absenteeism is
a symptom of
a Social
Malady**

THE PROBLEM of industrial absenteeism is a socio-economic problem and an unignorable challenge to students of society and social thought. To treat it in any other manner would be in the nature of an optimistic simplification of what is really a complex social problem and result in the adoption of false or inadequate remedies. Any action to punish an absentee worker without getting to the very bottom of the social difficulties that kept him from attending work is, on this showing, not only negative but socially wrong. Industrial absenteeism cannot be dismissed as 'normal' and or 'unavoidable' as though it is something fateful. Even the chronic malingerer will, perhaps, yield to scientific (but sympathetic) psychiatric handling. What is needed is a teleological approach and that is lacking in this country. The tradition of objective study of social problems that confront us has yet to take root. Absenteeism in industry must be accepted as a clamant symptom of a widely-prevalent social *malaise* and the search for a solution linked to the heroic sociological clean-up that is necessary effectively to cure the *malaise*.

**Readjust
Social condi-
tions to
human needs**

My thesis is this: in a very real sense, the industrial absentee—man is not born an absentee—, like the beggar, is a creation of and a commentary, in one, on the social set-up. My thesis is that the cure for absenteeism lies not so much in a readjustment of the man to the social conditions but principally in a readjustment of the social conditions to the needs of the man. That is the crux and ought to be the philosophy, the dynamics of all social action.

**Thereby
hangs a tale**

I think I had better tell a 'true story' to authenticate my stand, a leaf out of my book of experiences as an active Trade Unionist. Sitting in the Union office of one of our Unions at the Kolar Gold Fields, of an evening, I saw a miner enter, looking the very picture of human misery and despair, his eyes heavy with unshed tears. Naturally enough, I asked, "Well, what is it, now?" And this is what he told me, more or less.

"I am on the morning shift. I have my breakfast of *ragi ball* and two green chillies, generally water and some-

! Ragi is the staple food of the working people in South India, specially Mysore. Ragi flour is cooked and made into balls and served.

times a spot of tea to push the stuff down somewhere between six-thirty and seven. I generally go down the mine before eight. I am a God-fearing man, God has willed that I should be a miner, and I do an honest job of work. We are hoisted up somewhere about three and half-past in the afternoon. I go home pretty tired, have a bath and am ready to eat a little food. My wife brings a plate of rice, sometimes with a little *dal*, sometimes with a vegetable curry, specially on market days and sometimes just the rice. When I am about to start eating what there is, the children, I have five of them, rush in and clamour for a share of the rice. You see they are not given rice—it is cooked only for me, the bread-winner's privilege. Well, I haven't the heart to say 'no', I give them each a handful, my wife looking on in a resentful manner at the intrusion. I hurriedly gobble down what is left and get out. I eat but am always hungry. This happens, day in and day out, you see."

A true story truer than truth. At that time World War II was about two and-a-half years old and I think the man's basic wage was 9 annas a day.

**Social
Habilitation—
not Social
Resentment**

The point is—is that man to be fined, degraded or dismissed, the whole punishment-armoury of the employer directed against him, if he were to become an absentee and why? Is the approach to be one of resentment or social habilitation?

The point is, under the social conditions that obtain, today, between the good boy and the bad, the regular and the absentee, occasional as well as habitual, the margin of, to use not so good a word, loyalty (loyalty to work) is dangerously thin, indeed,

In the ultimate analysis, it is not a question of a social kick-back but one of social reconditioning. What is socially desirable is morally essential. The present crisis in human affairs is projected by the dire need for a socialist dispensation and the utter lack of the moral approach, leading to a reprehensible type of social regimentation and disregard of individual human personality. Seen from this angle, social reformism—the term 'reformism' has become a lable of opprobrium in the hands of certain political ideologists—is not the enemy or the antithesis of socialism. Social reformism, if it were not allowed to lose sight of the goal,

should be considered an initial first-step programme of socialism. With socialism as a destinal aim, social reorientation must be put under way.

If economic morality equates and is progressively made to equate with the first principles of social morality, the industrial absentee, for instance, becomes a subject of study instead of being condemned as an industrial delinquent. Delinquency is not all on the workers' door-step.

I do not apologise for the above indulgence in a semi-philosophical dissertation. We lack philosophy and, without it, our approach is cold and heartless.

**Assessment of
absenteeism
and undependability of
Statistics**

A concrete, dependable and factual assessment of the nature and extent of industrial absenteeism in this country cannot be made as the tradition of collection and collation of statistica material is in its infancy. (The Labour Bureau, recently set up by the Ministry of Labour, is a good augury). However, juxtaposed with man-hours lost, consequent upon innumerable religious holidays, strikes and so on, and judged from the angle of the country's urgent need for increased production of the essentials of a good living (increased production as a principal aid to a socially just distribution) the quantum of loss in production must be deemed to be considerable.

Professor Radhakamal Mukerjee estimates absenteeism among textile workers in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Sholapur and Nagpur in 1941 as under.¹

Bombay	9.50 per cent
Ahmedabad ²	4.48 per cent
Sholapur	12.30 per cent
Nagpur (Empress Mills, day shift only)	17.26 per cent

Prof. Mukerjee gives an interesting analysis, month by month, of absenteeism in a typical jute mill in Bengal in 1941.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
January	3.5	July	7.0
February	7.5	August	7.2
March	3.1	September	6.7
April	4.4	October	4.3
May	6.8	November	5.1
June	12.1	December	12.8

¹ **The Indian Working Class**

² I believe the figure is low and does not represent a true picture as at Ahmedabad if a *bodli* is provided the absence is not reckoned. The Rego Committee also draws attention to this.

The latest figures available for a fairly wide cross-section of Indian industries for the years 1939, 1943 and 1944 are given in Table 41 of the Labour Investigation Committee's main Report.¹ The report, however, warns that they must be "accepted with some caution". But they do afford an index of the magnitude of and an insight into the problem.

The overall average percentage for the country is somewhere between 12 to 14.

The concept of absenteeism

Absenteeism, for purposes of this note, is taken to signify absence from work that is unauthorised, unexplained, avoidable and wilful.

The Department of Labour, Government of India, have sought to define absenteeism or, to be more accurate, lay down a standard formula to calculate absenteeism percentage, in an elaborate manner and in the following terms.

"The absenteeism rate is defined as the total man-shifts lost because of absences as a percentage of the total number of man-shifts scheduled. For calculating the rate of absenteeism we require the number of persons scheduled to work and the number actually present. A worker who reports for any part of a shift is to be considered as present. An employee is to be considered scheduled to work when the employer has work available and the employee is aware of it, and when the employer has no reason to expect, well in advance, that the employee will not be available for work at the specified time. The following examples will illustrate the application of the principle. An employee on a regularly scheduled vacation should not be considered as scheduled to work or absent. The same is true during an employer-ordered lay-off. On the other hand, an employee who requests time-off at other than a regular vacation period should be considered as absent from scheduled work until he returns, or until it is determined that the absence will be of such duration that his name is removed from the list of active employees. After this date he should be considered as neither scheduled to work nor absent. Similarly, an employee who quits without notice should be considered as absent from scheduled work until his name is dropped from the active list, but preferably this period should not exceed one

¹ Table 41 is reproduced as an appendix to this article.

week in either case. If a strike is in progress workers on strike should be considered as neither scheduled to work nor absent, since data on time lost because of strikes are collected by other means.

You may introduce a card to record absence and collect statistics of absenteeism but you do not, thereby, solve the problem.

**Deterrent
punishment
is negative
and won't
take us far**

Any way, there are signs indicative of the realization that the problem demands a positive scientific approach and does not admit of real solution either through bumptious punishment or the temptation of monetary bribes, (Perfect Attendance Bonus and the like) calculated to buy better attendance. However, admittedly, the retributive attitude is the general rule and standing orders and such other regulations to provide for dismissal of employees for consecutive absenteeism of and over six and, in sometimes ten days. Truculence begets truculence; a bad employer should not hope to have angel-employees. Nonchalance breeds nonchalance and, to boot, frustration and frustration, among other things, absenteeism. As such what we should do is to counter in an unmistakably positive manner, the administrative obscurantism that attempts to tell the world that deterrent measures would cure what is a loud manifestation of a badly-constructed and thoughtless social system obfuscates the issue.

**A Fascist
essay in what
we ought
not to do**

Fascists—they are everywhere—develop unique fascist technique for handling social problems. This is how they dealt with absentees in Hitlerite Germany:

“Let's see how the Nazis handle the question of absenteeism. An order of the Reich's Labour Trustee for the Silesia District lays down the following fines for absentees:

For the first idle shift in a month, 1.00 R.M. (Reich Marks)

For the second idle shift in a month, 2.00 R.M.

For the third idle shift in a month, 4.00 R.M.

For the fourth idle shift in a month, 8.00 R.M.

For idle shifts on pay days and the day after, the fine will be 50 per cent higher. That is only the first step. The factory paper of the “Bochumer Verein” in the Ruhr District

had an article which declared that in addition to losing the shift's pay the fine would be a shift's wage for every idle shift. Hard cases of individuals "who are not even cured through protective custody or concentration camp will be brought to the newly installed Special Forced Labour Camp." Jailing is the rule when fines fail.

To make a short picture complete, I will quote from the 'N.S.Z. Westmark', Saarbruecken, of the 1st September 1943, which reported the case of three absentee workers who had been warned repeatedly by the Commissioner for Labour. The Court sentenced the first to six months imprisonment. The same sentence was passed on the second man, aged 38, despite the fact that he had twice been interned in a Labour Camp. The third, a girl, was sentenced to four months' imprisonment".¹

A Tale of Twelve causes

Having stated the basic problem, I should now turn to an examination, in some detail, of causation of absenteeism. A few factors could be listed, under the following broad heads :

a. The cold impersonality of the larger establishments in which the individual as a distinct sentient entity is, more or less lost and ignored and receives little or no attention.

Stated as I have done, this is a general indictment of industry, as a whole, in this country and elsewhere in the world. In modern industrial establishments, except, perhaps, in very small ones, the individual personality - undisputably each man is a personality - is, more or less, irretrievably submerged in the general mass through the sheer accident of being thrown together with other individuals for a certain purpose, during a good bit of each day's life. The individual has no elbow-room and is hammered into a set pattern. In contradistinction, the human spirit clamours for open spaces, unfettered air, so that it could kick its legs about for a change.

Very few of the men either know or made to know what they are about, what their place is in the scheme of things, what their appointed task is in the service of the community, how important or useless they are, why they should spend

¹ *I am a German Miner*, by Kurt Gruber, published by the National Union of Scottish Mine Workers.

their lives in the darkness of dingy rooms, day in and day out, year in and year out, and where they are leading to.

Individual talents and ambitions are steam-rolled into resentful dormancy and individual difficulties have no chance of expression. It is a system which defies freedom of enterprise but, in effect, denies freedom to the individual.

Individual grievances, very rarely, if at all, get a hearing and good men are rendered anti-social. The all-too-common official approach makes for hostility, though inarticulate.

We here of Personnel Management now-a-days. Yes, Personnel Management—'Management' is not a good word as it smacks of stream-lining, 'adjustment' is perhaps, a better substitute—is the line of approach. But it should not mean mechanisation of man but, should mean more than a rationalised deployment of labour, job analysis, job adjustment, scientific flow of production; it should aim at creating a whole-hearted sense of being *wanted*. It should endeavour to do more than giving each worker a booklet detailing the conditions of service and benefits (funeral benefits etc); it must concede that each worker is a PERSON.

As things stand, is it any wonder that workers want to stay away? It is a wonder that absenteeism is not more of a virulent epidemic.

Knowing the Indian worker as I do, I say this to the employer, "No worker, unless he is an irresponsible drunken lout or a congenital dunderhead wants to be an 'absentee' and court a loss in wages, which he can ill afford, and possible loss of employment, which may result in the endemic condition of semi-starvation developing into complete starvation of his family and incidentally, his own."

b. Deleterious and bad working conditions.

I should let somebody else speak for me, preferably an impartial outside observer.¹

"In India the manual worker is handicapped by climatic conditions, for high environmental temperatures reduce the

¹ *The Health of the Industrial Worker in India—A report by Dr. T. Bedford. D.Sc, Ph.D., M.I., Min.E of the Industrial Health Research Board of Medical Research Council in the United Kingdom*

capacity to work. It has caused me great *surprise* (italics mine) to find that in the majority of factories which I have visited roofs have been of a single layer of corrugated iron. Of all the roof materials that could have been chosen this is the worst. Its thermal insulating value is practically zero. It is dirty. Its outer surface absorbs virtually all the solar radiation which strikes it, and much of this heat is then transmitted into the building. The air within the building is warmed by contact with the hot roof, and the factory temperature, in this hot climate, is raised many degrees higher than it need be. Further, the radiation from the hot roof exerts its effect on the worker, so that the physiological strain to which he is subjected is substantially greater than would be expected from a consideration of the air temperature alone".

"At some factories new buildings have been roofed with corrugated asbestos cement. This material is a material little better than corrugated iron, but in thin sheets it is still not good. The thermal restivity of asbestos cement is not very high and considerable solar heat is transmitted through thin roofs constructed of this material".

"The air temperatures in many of the factories even in the early days of March were high".

"In some factories where hot processes are carried on temperatures are needlessly high owing to the failure of the management to lag hot surfaces, or to arrange ventilation so that air heated by contact with these surfaces is removed without mixing with the general atmosphere of the factory. At some glass works better insulation of the furnaces, and better provision for ventilation in the roof ridges, would have made working conditions less trying".

"The day-light illumination in some factories was good and in others it was poor. Poor lighting was sometimes due to dirty windows, in other instances adequate windows were not provided. In the composing room of one printing works the illumination varied greatly in different positionsIn a hosiery factory the very fine process of hosiery linking was done in a gloomy, ill-lit room. It was small wonder that all the workers engaged in these processes were boys or quite young men, and that the factory owner

told me that people much above thirty years of age were too old for the work."

"At the dusty factories (cotton mills) it was sometimes admitted that the workers developed 'a bit of a cough', but nobody in authority appeared to worry about this in the least".

"At one factory (pottery) I saw women scouring cups with sand paper. There was no provision for the removal of dust, and the women blew the dust from the ware into the atmosphere. One woman had a small child aged about 2 years sitting beside her and each time the mother blew dust from the ware on which she worked, her baby inhaled silica dust. On this visit I was accompanied by a factory inspector. He paid no attention to the dust hazard, and when I drew his attention to the serious risk to which the small child was exposed his only reaction was that the child was too young to be in a factory. He conferred with the works manager who told him that the factory was too small to provide a creche, and that unless women were allowed to bring their children to the factory freely labour could not be secured. The factory inspector smilingly conveyed the information to me and he was evidently perfectly satisfied."

One could reproduce the whole report—it is a ghastly story. But I can see the employer's man threatening an absentee with a fine—perhaps, of a week's wages but for the Payment of Wages Act!

Why do workers absent themselves from Work?

c. *Unspeakably Unsuitable Housing Condition.*

The Rege Committee (Main Report) quote the Governor of Bengal as having reported to have said in 1945, after an inspection of workers' bustees in Calcutta: "I have been horrified by what I have seen. Human beings cannot allow human beings to continue to exist under these conditions".

They say: "Most of the employers still cling to the old, discredited argument that housing conditions in industrial areas are no worse than conditions in villages wherefrom the workers are drawn. They hold that the migratory character of labour acts as a bar to the construction of good and permanent houses, little realising that bad and insanitary

houses themselves drive the workers to the rural areas off and on.....”

They even speak of workers' dwellings as “death-traps”.

“In one place, I saw a striking picture. I visited a large cement works situated several miles from the nearest town. For the works staff there was a colony which I was unable to visit, but I gathered that the accommodation was in accordance with present factory standards. Some distance from the works there was a quarry from which the limestone needed for cement manufacture was obtained. The quarrymen and their families lived alongside the quarry. A stone's throw from their little colony was a piggery. *The quarrymen lived in some of the poorest cocoanut shacks I have seen, while the pigs, which were of commercial value, dwelt in well-built concrete styres. I still regret I had no camera with me at the time*”¹ (Italics mine).

Why do workers absent themselves from duty?

d. Inadequacy of Welfare Facilities.

Welfare is either inadequate or non-existent—with a few exceptions—hats off to them!—because it is still nobody's business. Welfare still smacks of charity of grandmotherly benevolence. It is sometimes reckoned as profitable, “good business”. It is not yet a matter of right. Internal welfare is reluctantly provided to save face in the eyes of law; external welfare, well, where is the money and who is to finance it, the State, the employer or the State and the employer or the employee himself?

“In some of the factories the welfare work was carried on with a genuine desire to improve the lot of the workers. Some of the managements have evidently realised that labour is industry's most valuable capital. I have gained the impression, however, that such factories are relatively few in number. Even in some large factories ‘welfare’ work is carried on in a half-hearted fashion, and is but a poor imitation of that done by the better organisations.

“The worst example of so-called welfare work which I have encountered was a large factory employing about 7,000

¹ Dr. Bedford.

workers. There were two whole-time doctors, both middle-aged and both graduates, one paid Rs. 150/- and the other Rs. 135/- per month. They were not good representatives of the medical profession. Their office was very dirty. The dispensary was in a still worse state. Paper cartons of drugs were lying open, and the surface of powders contained in them were coated with dust. The furled edges of the paper linings of the cartons were black where dirty fingers had handled them. The benches and tables had not been washed for a very long time, and were stained by repeated spillages. The compounder's room adjoining the dispensary was in disgusting state, and filthy garments lay on a mattress. On the external wall of this dispensary was the inscription 'Charitable Dispensary'—an insult to the name of Charity".¹

I want to pose a sample question: "Is the employer responsible for the safe custody of the employees' bicycles?"

e. *Fatigue and the Innate desire for Rest and Enjoyment.*

We, in this country, have recently brought the working hours to forty-eight per week. Have we done all that we should in this respect so that we could now sit back and rest on our oars? The Bhore Committee (The Health Survey and Development Committee) have mooted a forty-five hour week. The incidence of industrial fatigue, what with the trying climate, universal malnutrition and consequent lack of staminal resistance and working conditions which are, in all conscience, horrifying in many cases, must be colossal, indeed, even with the reduced working hours. Planned rest spells are more or less non-existent. "Any studies of hours of work should take into account factory temperature, for it may be that the optimum length of the working day, and possibly the arrangement of the hours of work, is significantly influenced by the thermal environment."²

So the problem is not how many hours an average Indian could work, but consistent with the country's needs and the worker's own future, how many hours he should be permitted to work.

The machine must be adjusted to the man.

Provision has recently been made for a statutory holiday of 10 days—not enough but, well, a good beginning. What

¹ Dr. Bedford. ² Dr. Bedford.

the workers do with the holidays, it is nobody's concern. Workers require to be *assisted* in the proper utilisation of the holiday.

f. Sickness and Industrial Illness which is traceable to unattended minor injuries.

Insurance against sickness would help a bit; and the overall incidence of sickness could only be reduced by a long-term many frontal national crusade against disease and malnutrition. The bill for absenteeism attributable to unattended minor injuries must be debited to the employer's account.

g. Inadequacy or utter lack of transport facilities.

Workers who have to travel long distances to get to work, naturally enough, absent themselves, off and on.

h. Ration difficulties and the like.

It is my personal experience that workers do take a day off, occasionally, to buy their food and other requirements. It should not be a bad idea if supply of provisions to the employees at reasonably low or even subsidised rates, were made a statutory obligation on the part of the employer but with an unequivocal insulatory ban on stoppage of such supplies as an anti-strike or strike-breaking weapon.

i. Sowing and harvest seasons, malaria seasons and epidemics.

The latter part does not need any comment.

Till such a time as urban life is not made sufficiently attractive and liveable, seasonal absenteeism will persist.

j. Lack of a systematically trained labour force and consequent recruitment of marginal workers to meet the demands of growing industrialisation and unsympathetic attitude towards the growing pains of the new and unseasoned learner-worker.

If such men were made to feel at home, welcomed with unpretentious warmth, specially trained for the job and treated with friendly sympathy at all times, and specially till they have found their niche, the atmosphere of the factory would change overnight. New men come from the freedom of open spaces to the restraint of the walled-in factory; naturally enough, they must be mothered. This is where

the Personnel Manager or his staff ought to come in. The reception even at a prison should be warm.

k. *An ever-present sense of insecurity of employment.*

The Pathan armed with an enormous *lathi*, standing at the gate, generally looking forbidding, is the symbol of the whole set-up. The *lathi*-technique (and all that it means), generally speaking, is the approach to human problems in most factories. Dismissal, which like capital punishment, is total in effect and, should be rarely resorted to, if *at all*, is common, more common than we suspect. I have known of cases wherein men have just been bundled out without even as much as a little play-acting in the shape of an enquiry. I have known of cases wherein workers have been unceremoniously given the 'sack' for no other reason except that they wanted repayment of moneys they had loaned to the foreman. Actually, I know of a case when a man was dismissed for insubordination—he was found grinning when his official superior (no less a person than the Head of the Deptt) was addressing him. It transpired that the man's physiognomic make-up was such that he could not help grinning, that he grinned, walking and sleeping. The management was convinced, after sometime, that the man could not but grin if his facial muscles functioned that way.

I think we need another Rege Committee to look into this terrible problem of insecurity. I know this undertone... clamorous feeling of insecurity of employment exists; it is an oppressive feeling, a de-humanising agency. I think it leads to all sorts of things—complexes and inhibitions (incidentally, absenteeism). It vitiates the worker's out-look. It weakens his springs of action. It obtunds his social fervour. It frustrates him and renders him undesirably docile. I think there are only two or three Trade Unions (I want to be told I am wrong) in the country which are interested in and pursue what are called "individual cases". The dismissed worker's case always goes by default. It is a doleful saga.

l. *Lack of a sense of belonging that only progressively increasing participation in the governance of industry can redeem.*

This is a patent charge. You cannot blame the worker for not displaying interest unless you *give* him an interest, a

binding, gripping absorbing interest When he asks for more --knowing that it is his due --he is accused of playing the Oliver Twist all the time. If he is a "partner in industry" as it is sometimes said, why should he have to ask for this and that? He stays away, off and on, because he is not made to feel that he has a real place in the scheme of things and knows that nobody bothers much about him and does not see why he should not. He has no sense of belonging psychologically, because he does not belong.

**What then
must we do?**

So, it will be seen that the problem of industrial absenteeism is not a simple one; it will be seen that it is not a problem, but many problems in one; it will be seen that there is no immediate or short-term solution; it will be seen that you may direct a person to work in the coal mines, as they do in the U.K., or punish him for being an absentee for all you are worth, but that does not help you to improve working conditions in the collieries, which, admittedly, promote absenteeism.

Absenteeism is wrong and anti-social; but the system that engineers absenteeism and seeks to punish a man for being an absentee is wrong and anti-social too. The right way is the way of discarding obsolescent methods, the way of a positive psychological understanding of the worker mind, the way of 'trans-valuation' of ante-dated, out-moded social values.

THE ELEMENTS OF INDUSTRIAL WELL-BEING

SIR WILFRID GARRETT

Lately Chief Adviser Factories, Government of India

Sir Wilfrid Garrett, who as H. M. Chief Inspector of Factories in the U.K. was known on both sides of the Atlantic, possesses the authenticity of forty years' experience to speak with authority. He has looked at the Indian Factory scene with his trained eyes and has warned us that we still have time to avoid the horrors of unbridled industrialisation but that such avoidance is dependent upon planning "Now" and the situation brooks no delay. He gives PRIORITY 'A' to housing, with amenities for cleanliness and health, warns that promotion of industrial health is a job for the trained expert and not the well-intentioned amateur, indicts Indian importers of machinery for failure to

live up to their responsibility in respect of acquiring machinery fitted with guards, now commonly accepted as an elementary necessity, and, on the human side of the scene, has observed "some practices, even in large firms concerned with the handling of labour that, in an industrial nation, would now be just considered bad business".

IT IS an engrossing experience to be able to study on the spot the troubles of a nation where industry has expanded during the war years and is likely to expand much more rapidly in the future and to compare them with those revealed in the history of a Western nation at the time when it was going through similar experiences. This I am able to do from the fact that I have spent forty years of my life as a Factory Inspector in the United Kingdom in close contact with conditions and developments in all types of factories and now have been honoured by the great opportunity to come to India to advise on matters concerned with Factory Inspection.

**Take Britain's
tale of woes
to heart**

It is a serious matter when a nation, with or without thought, brings its country-bred people for the purposes of work from the villages into centres that quickly develop into large towns without proper provision in the way of housing, drinking water and proper methods for the disposal of sewage. In the United Kingdom this was done without thought at the end of the Eighteenth Century and we have suffered ever since in that conglomeration of slums that goes to make up such a large part of our industrial towns, a mistake which three generations of active legislation and massive sanitary engineering has not yet fully eradicated.

**Housing of
workers with
amenities for
cleanliness
and health
should receive
first priority**

A first necessity then for a nation that intends to become industrialised is to see that decent provision is made for the housing of the workers who may be brought together in large masses to work in its factories and to see that these houses are provided with the proper amenities for cleanliness and health. How these houses are to be built or who is to build them is not for me to say. I only say that a sound industrial system cannot exist without them. The requirements have been considered and the details worked out in such reports as that of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, the Health Survey and Development Committee known as the *Bhore Report* and in the report of the Industrial Housing Sub-Committee of the Standing Labour Committee, and perhaps my only excuse for referring to the matter is that I feel that the contents of these reports and of others, as well as knowledge of the actual conditions of some of the present houses, are not known to those who make up that

collected opinion of India that must be available to help the State in dealing with these matters.

India has still a chance to plan her industrial towns but she must plan right now

There is much to be done, first in putting right the centres of population that are still without these amenities and secondly in giving thought to real planning to avoid the mistakes that have been made here and in other countries in the new centres that may come into being. India has this advantage, namely, that still ninety per cent of its population live away from large centres of population while eighty percent of the population of the United Kingdom live in towns, but it is also well to remember that, because of the immense total population of India, this does not mean a very great divergence in actual numbers in the two countries. The United Kingdom also suffered, in this respect, from the fact that it was first in the Industrial Revolution, when, under the doctrine of *laissez faire* not only was no attempt made to plan the towns but it was actually thought wrong for any government to interfere in such matters. As a consequence the factories took the best sites and houses were crowded round them just as the jerry builder pleased to erect them and without any thought of planning on amenities. India can avoid this by planning now.

Good manual work cannot be done⁽²⁾ without good food: Legal pressure to promote a Canteen movement

On the question of the actual provision of food, though it had been solved to some degree by the gradual rise in wages, it is remarkable that it was only in the war years that the necessity of making food available for workers was realised. In fact, the war brought us back to the realisation of the two elementary facts—the need for proper housing and proper food. Many hostels had to be built for the housing of the workers transferred to large munition factories and a deliberate plan was set on foot and given legal sanction to set up canteens in every factory employing more than two hundred and fifty persons. As a result canteens supplying a hot cooked mid-day meal as well as snacks and tea in the breaks were set up in ninety-eight percent of the factories where they were required by law and so successful were the results that this led to the voluntary initiation of canteens in about six-thousand other factories employing less than the legal number. With the canteens set up in docks and building sites there were in use in the last year of the war about 12,000 canteens on places under the jurisdiction of the

Factory Department, besides those on mines and railways and in addition to the provision made for isolated workers through British Restaurants. The object of the provision of all these canteens was to ensure that those engaged in manual labour should have an opportunity of getting extra food in addition to the meagre ration that they were entitled to as citizens, but there was also the sound principle behind it that good manual work cannot be done without good food. These facts are given to show what can be done under the urge of war and of legal pressure, because it is doubtful if more than 1,500 canteens were in use in factories before the outbreak of the last war in spite of testimony as to their value by the good employers who supplied them.

The Factories Act and conditions of Labour

Next come the conditions of labour that can be covered by the Factories Act. Apart from the special conditions relating to Holidays, Payment of Wages and Maternity Benefits, there are four main subjects dealt with by all the Factory Acts of the Industrial nations :—

- (1) Hours of work of protected persons ;
- (2) Industrial Health ;
- (3) Prevention of accidents ; and
- (4) Welfare and Personnel Management, and we might consider these separately in that order.

Hours of work of protected persons

As the hours of work of adult males are limited by law in India, every one employed in the factory comes under this heading, though the control is stricter in the case of women, adolescents and children. In the United Kingdom, the hours of adult men (over 18 years of age) have been regulated in Mines but only to a very small extent in Factories. In the latter case the Trade Unions have always insisted that they were able to regulate the hours of adult men by negotiation and it has always been the policy of Parliament to allow them to do so.

Over-lapping shifts

It is a fact that the strict enforcement of the legalised hours of labour is always a turning point in the observance of the Factories Acts. Until such enforcement is obtained neither employer nor worker feels that the law is a reality; one reason that accounts for this is that when wages are low there is a resentment against the control of the right to work long hours of overtime almost as much from the

worker as from the employer. I do not think this enforcement has yet been reached in India because it is still possible to work protected persons in multiple or overlapping shifts. This means that different relays of workers may be engaged on the same work, in the same room and at the same time while the hours of commencing and ceasing work of the various relays may be different. In such a case transference from one relay to another during the course of the shift is the easiest thing possible and if there is collusion between the employer and the worker no system of inspection can enforce the law. Such a system was legal in Great Britain for some years after the Factories Act of 1833 and a court decision that the system was still legal almost wrecked the working of the famous Ten-Hours Bill - one of the charters of the Lancashire Cotton Operatives - so much so that a new Act had to be passed in 1850 to prevent overlapping shifts by insuring that all protected persons should be employed within a definite "Period of Employment".

**Paucity of
trained
personnel
advanced as
excuse**

By the Factories (Amendment) Act of 1946, the weekly maximum hours of all workers in India in peace time have been reduced to 48 subject to a certain allowance of over-time in the case of adult workers. There is also an exception that adult workers engaged in work which for technical reasons must be continuous throughout the day may work for fifty-six hours in any week. The reason for this is said to be the scarcity of technical workers and if this is so it is another reason why India should push forward the training of its technical grades. The original reason was probably the fact that if an industry has, for technical reasons, to work for 24 hours per day and for 7 days per week a system of three shifts of 8 hours each requires each worker to work 7 shifts or a weekly total of 56 hours. This was a common system in Great Britain, but following an arrangement made between both sides of the Iron & Steel Industry this weekly total of 56 hours was reduced to 48 per week by the simple expedient of employing 7 men to do 6 men's work and thus giving each man one turn off per week. Apart from the greater leisure this gives, this shortening of hours is to be commended because all Industrial Medical Officers are agreed that work at night and the change of shifts is always a severe strain on the human system. With this goes the break up of the usual hours of home life and loss of the usual hours

of recreation, all of which point to the fact that the workers who man continuous processes have a right to shorter hours than those employed on regular day turns. In fact I personally hope to see the day when the world will have so settled down to an ordered way of life that we shall be able to reduce the hours of these workers on average to 42 per week under a system of four shifts as is already required by law in some countries under the International Labour Convention for Sheet Glass Manufacture.

Industrial Health

Very little has been done in the past in India either by legal enactment or in actual fact to deal with the subject which is known as Industrial Health in the industrialised nations of the west. This is shown by the fact that India does not have even a single Medical Inspector of Factories and that research into this subject is practically non-existent. It is true that doctors are employed in many Indian factories but with the exception of two organisations, their work consists entirely, so far as I have seen, in controlling a dispensary for dealing with the ordinary illnesses of the people employed in the factory and of their families. So fully employed are they on this work that they have no time to go inside the factory to study the environmental conditions of work that may affect the persons employed.

Control of specific diseases and protection of general health—two planks of industrial health

Industrial Health, as now conceived, can be divided, for practical purposes, into two departments: (1) The control of specific diseases due to the use of certain substances or to certain processes in factories, and (2) The protection of the general health of the operatives from ailments that may be due to defects in ventilation, humidity, excessive heat and the like, defects which may affect the general health of all employed persons. The control of the first is the primary duty of the Inspectors of Factories enforcing legislation that is now well-known and accepted. The second, though in some degree controlled by legislation, is becoming more and more the sphere of the Industrial Medical Officer, who, of course, also takes his share in the control of industrial diseases.

The father of the study of direct industrial diseases and of the institution of legal enactments to control and prevent these diseases was Sir Thomas Legge, appointed the first Medical Inspector of Factories (in any country) in Great

Britain in 1898. His first great work and of that of his colleagues in the Factory Department is shown in the number of cases of Lead Poisoning reported in U.K. which in 1900 was 1,058 and in 1945, 45, while we know that the actual reduction was even greater because in 1900 the cases were not all reported while to-day all are known.

Sir Thomas Legge's four principles

In his fight against this disease Legge laid down four principles that, while aimed particularly against lead poisoning, can be applied with equal force to other similar diseases and some of them even to the prevention of accidents; they, therefore, warrant the closest study by all concerned with the well-being of workers in factories.

They are:—1

- (1) Unless and until the employer has done everything—and everything means a good deal—the workman can do next to nothing to protect himself, although he may be naturally willing enough to do his share.
- (2) If you bring an influence to bear external to the workman (i.e., one over which he can exercise no control), you will be successful; and if you cannot or do not, you will never be wholly successful.
- (3) Practically all industrial lead poisoning is due to the inhalation of dust and fumes; and if you stop their inhalation, you will stop the poisoning.
- (4) All workmen should be told something of the danger of the material with which they come into contact and not be left to find it out for themselves—sometimes at the cost of their lives.

It is a co-operative adventure among doctors, engineers, chemists and Inspectors of Factories

The carrying out of these precautions requires the closest co-operation between doctors, engineers and chemists, both in the factory and in the ranks of Factory Inspectors. Any success that may have been gained in the United Kingdom has been due, in a large measure, to the team work that exists between Inspectors with varied qualifications and again in the confidence and trust that exist between these Government Inspectors and the heads of firms and their technical staffs. Without this team work and confidence little progress

¹ *Industrial Maladies* by Sir Thomas Legge—Oxford University Press.

will be made. This requires first a keen Inspectorate competent in their work and alive to its value and second that this Inspectorate should be received by managements as friends and advisers who are out to help and are competent to do so.

As will be seen from the four points quoted above, there are definite rules by which these dangers to health should be tackled.

Elimination of the danger by alteration of materials or processes .

First it is much better to get rid of the danger entirely by an alteration of the materials or process than to try and correct the evils. The outstanding example of this is the substitution of a safe sesquisulphide of phosphorous for the dangerous yellow phosphorous in the manufacture of matches. This was done internationally by the Berne Convention of 1906 and the dreadful disease of "phossy jaw" was swept away almost in a night. Other examples are the removal of the silicosis risk from the cutlery grinders by the substitution of artificial for natural grinding wheels and from potters by the substitution of alumina for silica in the bedding of chinaware.

Control of the dangerous element

If this cannot be done, then make the process safe by keeping the dangerous element under control. Formerly white lead in its wet pulp stage had to be dried before being ground into oil, but a discovery that made it possible to convert the wet lead pulp directly into oil paint enabled the workmen to handle it without any dangerous dust being produced.

India must give early attention to this under expert advice

In most cases, however, the poisonous dust and fumes of lead and of many other materials, have to be controlled at their point of origin and thus prevented from entering the air breathed by the worker. To do this successfully has taken years of experience and experiment and only those who know what has been done and the difficulties involved can give sound advice. I would warn engineers that however good they may be in their own line, they may easily make mistakes in this work of exhaust ventilation. It is always good policy, therefore, to call in expert ventilating engineers and to have the plans checked by the Factory Inspector. In my short experience in India, I have seen so many defects either of failure to control the dust and fumes in any way or in bad design where an attempt has been made, that I am

convinced this is one of the points that should have early attention in Indian factories. While I have used lead poisoning as my chief illustration in this article because of the general use of lead in industry, I would also ask for particular attention to be given to what, from my experience, is a wide danger in Indian works; that is the risk to health due to the breathing of fine silica dust that produces the dread disease of silicosis. The danger in factories is in sand-blasting plants, steel foundries, potteries, chipping and dressing of silicons, building materials and indeed wherever silicious material is allowed to produce dust that can be breathed. The process of blasting with sand has now been made illegal in the U.K. because the sand can easily be replaced by steel shot or other abrasive, but in India I still see, in some works, sand being used, without proper exhaust draught, and even without any attempt to control the dust within the machine. Space will only allow me to hint at the grave dangers to life and health that can arise through failure to control the dangers in the manufacture of chromate salts or the fumes of benzene, acids and the like. I can only add that expert advice should not only be sought on these obvious dangers but also in many processes which may carry with them dangers unknown to those who control them.

**Specially
trained
Industrial
Medical
Officers
essential**

In all this the Industrial Medical Officer and the Certifying Surgeon must have their share, because medical examination at stated intervals is the best and probably the only check on the success or failure of the efforts of the engineers and the chemist. In many industrial diseases, of which tar cancer is an example, frequent medical examination and advice will ensure complete immunity. In addition this Medical Officer can do much by watching over the health of the operatives in all processes and warning the management of danger signals that show that all is not well. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Bill to cover Health Insurance that is now before the Legislature may in some degree relieve the present Medical Officers in Factories from their dispensary duties so that they may be able to fulfil the true role of an Industrial Medical Officer, but again I would warn managements and these officers that this work should not be undertaken without special training in the field of industrial medicine:

**Accident
Prevention**

In spite of the fact that the first Inspectors of Factories in the United Kingdom were mainly appointed to control the excessive hours of children, it is not surprising that their attention was soon attracted to the number of accidents causing either loss of life or serious bodily injury. At this time public opinion was so non-existent or so dull that a state of affairs that would not be tolerated today was then accepted as normal to such an extent.

In spite of the efforts of the earlier Inspectors, the prevention of accidents on a scientific basis was not taken up seriously till about the end of the last century, when a number of highly trained engineers were appointed as Factory Inspectors. Since that time, largely under the influence of these men, the prevention of accidents on machines in factories has become the world-wide concern of all industrial nations and has the full help of technical committees of the International Labour Office. This side of Factory Inspection is no static thing, it is always growing and expanding under the influence of Inspectors, Works Managers, and many voluntary societies. No country, therefore, can afford to stand still or to be out of touch with what is occurring in other countries. As an index of the progress made, one percent fatalities in the cotton mills of Great Britain, has now been reduced to about .014 percent, or, much less than two per 10,000. To keep up this standard, a great weight falls on the makers of modern machinery, because the safeguards necessary can be embodied so much more easily into the machine during construction than fitted in a haphazard manner afterwards. *I am afraid many of the importers of machinery into this country are not living up to their responsibilities in this respect, because apart from modern textile machinery, I have seen many machines at work here that are not fitted with the guards now accepted as necessary in other countries.*¹

**Works
committees
could start
a career of
usefulness
with accident
prevention**

Another proof of the advance made in the safety of power-driven machines is the fact that the proportion of accidents that occur on these machines has been steadily falling, till in Great Britain it has now reached the low figure of 14 percent. If then there is to be a real attack on the accidents that now occur in factories, the same attention must in the

¹ Editors' italics.

future be given to those accidents due to falls, handling of goods, use of hand tools and the like that make up the other 86 percent of accidents. Here, in my opinion, legal enactment can do very little, and results can only be obtained by the good-will and action of all employed within the factory, both management and workers. In fact the prevention of accidents forms a good subject for the attention of the Works Committee, mentioned below, as a first step in their career of usefulness. There is also such a thing as accident proneness on which our scientific friends are inclined to lay great stress. It has its place in the study of these non-machinery accidents, and may have its influence on accidents, on machines, though, in my opinion, its influence on the latter is infinitesimal compared with that of making the machines safe.

Welfare and Personnel Management

There has grown up during the years since the first World War a new conception of management within the factory, which deals with the study of conditions of work and is concerned with the general human relationships within an industrial organisation; this has come to be known as Welfare and Personnel Management. This name suggests the two divisions of the work because the welfare side, which concerns itself with the physical amenities necessary for the comfort of the worker, is a basis without which no progress can be made. The personnel side, on the other hand, extends, in ever-expanding circles, to those higher reaches of the spirit which include the psychological study of the human personalities that go to make up the working population of a factory, and takes into account everything that will make for the smooth working of the industrial machine on its human side. The subject has been studied closely in the industrial nations of the world and in the I. L. O., while many societies, both voluntary and professional, are giving their encouragement to its perfecting and development.

Welfare amenities

To deal separately with the two divisions suggested above, I may point out that some of the provisions, looked upon as welfare amenities in more temperate climates become absolute essentials for health in a tropical country such as India. In this connection, I can mention the provision of an abundant supply of clean and cool drinking water, ample facilities for washing and bathing, rest shelters and canteens and perhaps that provision which India seems to be taking

close to its kindly heart more than any other nation, the
 (c) provision of creches for the care of babies and young children while their mothers are at work.

A crusade of cleanliness

All these can be supplied more easily than kept up to a high standard of cleanliness. It is not an exciting job to see daily that the latrines are clean, but, believe me, they will not be clean, either in this or any other country, unless someone in authority visits them daily, and neglect in this particular has an effect on the minds of the workers that is rarely expressed in words but is always there.

Personnel Management has been defined by the professional institute of Great Britain in the following terms:—

“ Personnel management is that part of management's function which is primarily concerned with the human relationships within an organization. Its objective is the maintenance of those relationships on a basis which, by consideration of the well-being of the individual, enables all those engaged in the undertaking to make their maximum personal contribution to the effective working of that undertaking.

“ In particular, personnel management is concerned with :
 Methods of recruitment, selection, training and education and with the proper employment of personnel ;

Terms of employment, methods and standards of remuneration, working conditions, amenities, and employee services ;

The maintenance and effective use of facilities for joint consultation between employers and employees and between their representatives, and of recognized procedures for the settlement of disputes.”

This is a comprehensive definition that implies dealings with Trade Union on a fair and equitable basis, the setting up and the encouragement of Works Committees and Safety Committees within the works and the acceptance of the worker and his representatives as persons vitally interested in and worthy to be consulted about all that makes for the well-being of the industry concerned.

It is an attitude of mind

The first essential, however, in making this great experiment succeed, is a right attitude of mind on the part of the higher executives of management (because this idea is and will be

equally necessary under whatever system industry is carried on).

So far, I have seen little sign in India that this attitude of mind is accepted. Many firms, to their honour, are doing their best to develop this side of management, and many good and efficient men and women are devoting their lives to the work as personnel officers. But the majority of firms have not yet accepted the full implication that all this idea stands for. In the west this side of management is no longer looked upon as philanthropy it is considered essential for the conduct of affairs within the factory ; and, *frankly, I have seen some practices in India, even in large firms, concerned with the handling of labour, that, in an industrial nation would now just be considered bad business.*¹

Many, many, more trained workers are also required in the field ; training is essential for these officers, but it can now be obtained at Calcutta University, and I would suggest that the acceptance and the development of this idea in Indian Industry will do even more for the future of that Industry than many of the enactments already on the statute book. What I have written elsewhere for another country is equally applicable in India. May I repeat it as a humble ending to this article :

“The great advance, however, must come from a right attitude of mind in everyone from the directorate to the chergehand with trade union representatives and internal committees. Close team work of all concerned with the skilled advice of trained personnel management will go far towards bringing to the forefront that emphasis on the value of the human side in industry that has been so neglected in the past and is now shown to be of such supreme importance.”

¹ Editors' italics.

THE SAGA OF AN INDIAN INSPECTOR OF FACTORIES

A FACTORY INSPECTOR

Here is an anecdotal account of the work-a-day life of an Indian Inspector of Factories, who started with a mere 400 work-places, scattered over 13 districts, located in two territories, 500 miles apart. He has heard the unheard cries of overworked child wage-slaves; early in his career he picked up the technique of surprise visits, sometimes disguised, travelling anyhow; he has had to face and fight organised conspiracy and vilification on the part of the employers; he has seen how ready employers are to corrupt the officers of law; he has had to discover ways and means to circumvent employers' espionage; he has scaled over walls and jumped through windows to get into

factories; he has faced man-handling and obstruction -- quite a drama-ridden saga.

The position is a bit better now—just a bit. Indifference is still in the saddle and there are still miles on miles of the road to safety to be covered.

**"APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR THE FOLLOWING
POSTS IN THE FACTORY INSPECTION DEPARTMENT
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF....."**

**"Applicants must ordinarily be under thirty years of age ;
have received liberal education ; and also, either good
theoretical training in Engineering and thorough practical
training in Mechanical Engineering, or have practical
experience of factory life. They should also have a
general knowledge of the principles of Sanitation....."**

It was in consequence of the above advertisement which appeared nearly 24 years ago that I started my career as an Assistant Inspector of Factories. It was the beginning of the Factory Inspection Department as a separate organisation ; previously it was a part of the Boiler Inspections Department. I have quoted the advertisement *in extenso*, in view of the discovery I made very soon that the qualifications mentioned here were not the only qualifications required in a successful Factory Inspector.

**A Four-
hundred
Factories for
one Inspector**

After a month's preliminary training under my Chief, I was given my first regular charge. It covered two separate territories, 500 miles apart. One of the territories consisted of 8 districts and the other 5. The number of factories in both was about 400. Of these—a large number were seasonal, mostly Cotton Ginning and Pressing Factories and Rice Mills. In one territory, these seasonal factories worked from November to May and in the other from March to June. The Factory Inspector was required to inspect every factory at least once a year ; and, with a charge as extensive as mine I was constantly on the move.

**The Cries of
Children were
Cries in the
Wilderness**

I soon found that the factory laws were almost a dead letter, especially in the mofussil. Here, poor labour was exploited to the utmost. Under the Factories Act, employment of children under 12 is entirely forbidden, while employment of children above 12 and of women is permissible only during the day. But here children even under 12 were freely employed, and employed during prohibited hours, to say nothing of children over 12 and women being employed during the night. I have known of cases of little children who

worked till a factory closed at 11-00 p.m., slept in the factory on gin platforms with lumps of cotton as their covering during wintry cold nights, and started working again at 4-00 a.m. when the factory reopened for work.

Drama of a Surprise Visit

I also found that breaking through this established system was not a simple matter. The proprietors of these factories were, generally speaking, men of considerable influence locally, and could be depended upon to make the task of a zealous Factory Inspector very difficult. It was obvious that to be successful, I must pay surprise visits at times when I could be least expected. The experience of the first such visit is very vivid to me to this day, and I am relating it in view of its novelty as an initial venture.

The place was a wayside station, where I was a complete stranger. I reached it by a night train and took up my abode in the Railway waiting room. There were two ginning factories, not far from the railway station. They started working from 4-00 a.m.; and soon thereafter I started on my venture. I approached the gate of one of the factories. The gate was closed, but a small window in it was open. Inside, a burly watchman, with a bamboo stick in hand, sat upright, snoring hard. I slipped through this window, without disturbing the sleeping sentinel, and reached the gin platform.

The factory was working in full swing, a number of women and children feeding the gins. I noted the time, and sent for the Manager. I informed the workers who I was, and took down the names of some of the women and children. Presently, an elderly gentleman turned up. He asked me, in broken Hindustani, who I was. I replied in his own language that I was an Inspector of Factories. He had not heard of any member of his own community being appointed as an Inspector of Factories, and he did not believe me. I showed to him the Government permit; but no one among those present knew English or any of the vernaculars printed on the permit, with the result that I was taken for an imposter and treated as such. I was marched off to the office to be handed over to the Police. I hoped the Police would arrive soon and secure my release, so that I could attack the other factory before day light. But I was told the police station was a good distance away, and that my captor's instructions were to send for the Police in the morning. I then

kicked up a row, which again brought the old man (who I learnt was the proprietor) on the scene. I told him I was anxious to catch the other factory as well, and that by detaining me he was helping the other to get its warning and thus escape at his cost. This had its effect: I was allowed to go under escort, which I was very pleased to have.

The gate of the other factory was closed, but it was easily opened by the gateman at the instance of my escort, as they were known to each other. Here too I found a number of women and children working during restricted hours. The Manager here knew English and did not put up any resistance. On finishing my work here, I returned to the first factory. By then the proprietor's doubts as to my *bona fides* had disappeared, and he was all apologies.

In this way I roped in a number of offenders in this territory in quick succession, almost before the news of my activities could travel to them. My moves had to be secret and quick, and I appeared in places where I was the least expected.

An Organised Conspiracy

And then the considerable influence which these owners of factories possessed was set to work. First, influence was brought to bear on me, with the plea that this was their first offence and with offers of temptation. As I did not relax, deputation was sent to wait on my Chief. He did not yield either, and complaints were duly filed in Courts. Then District Magistrates (who have power to order withdrawal of criminal proceedings) were approached, but without success. Finally, a pool was formed to contest one of the cases as a test case. A very prominent and leading lawyer was engaged for the defence.

The accused in this case, was charged with employing women and children at night, thus infringing the factory law. He pleaded not guilty. The defence was that my complaint was false, and evidence was led to show that I had visited the factory only during the day and not at night, and that my remarks about the employment of women and children at night were false. This plea was backed up by an array of over a dozen witnesses, some of them placed very high in society. It was added that I had cooked up a false complaint to gain credit in my department, as I was a young

and fresh recruit. These false pleas, however, did not hold; the accused was convicted and fined. After this trial, the remaining members of the pool pleaded guilty.

An European Employer Fabricates a Dinner Story

In one case, the accused, an European, was not a member of the pool. He pleaded that my complaint could not be true, as at the alleged time of detection, I was dining with him in his bungalow, and he produced his butler and some friends to corroborate him. However, the Court did not believe this story: he too was convicted.

They even Tried to Buy the Inspector over

I have had to face many attempts to corrupt me. There have been occasions when wads of currency notes have been proffered with impudence and spurned by me. On one occasion representatives of two factories which I had caught came pleading right up to the train by which I departed from the place. After the train had moved out of the station, I found a small packet on the seat vacated by these gentlemen, and on examining it found it contained currency notes. The ownership of these notes was obvious to me, but the gentlemen to whom they belonged when questioned later denied all knowledge. There was no option to passing on the find to the Railway as unclaimed property.

At times excuse is made of ceremonial functions, e. g. weddings in the family of the factory owners etc., to make presents of costly articles, like silver utensils, gold ornaments or pieces of jewelry. It is argued that such presents are tokens of auspicious occasions and should not on that account be refused. Needless to say, such frivolous arguments find no acceptance and the presents have had to be declined, sometimes with brute bluntness.

Had to find Ways and Means to Circumvent an Espionage Ring

My first season's activities were enough to invite spying on my movements. Enquiries would be made at railway stations, dak bungalows and other places where I had stayed and my movements followed up. In my endeavours to evade this espionage, I went in not only for personal physical inconvenience, but a lot of adventure. I would travel by goods trains, in bullock carts, or on foot for miles on end at night. I had to adopt disguises to avoid recognition. I had to scale high walls to effect entry into factories surreptitiously.

Once I had to go to a village in the interior and I was aware that the roads leading to it were watched. This place was on one side of a large flowing river, and the alternative was to

approach it from the other side of the river through a dense forest. I had been informed that the forest was the rendezvous of dacoits and robbers, but as I did not carry anything of value, this did not deter me. Accordingly, I travelled by train to the other side of the river and from there started on a road journey on camel back at night. After crossing the river and wending through the dense forest, luckily without any encounter with robbers, I reached the village about midnight. I asked the camel-man if he could find me a place to rest for the night; but the poor man could only suggest a visit to the camel-men's camp. I learnt that this camp was close to the factory; so we went there. I was very kindly offered the shelter of a small room without any ventilation and ill-lit, with a country-made oil lamp emitting smoke. It was partly occupied, and the occupant kept coughing and groaning all the time. A most unenviable place, where resting was impossible. However, I tarried here, marking time and was happy when I heard the hooter of the factory in the early hours of the morning. Very soon I took it by surprise and detected infringements which would have been concealed or avoided had the factory had any warning of my approach.

**The Inspector
goes in
Disguise**

Some factories had arranged their night shifts to start after the departure of a train and after assuring themselves that the Factory Inspector had not arrived and the way was clear. One bright moon-lit night the Factory Inspector did arrive, but despite the local vigilance was not noticed. I had donned a disguise and a false beard and moustache. I loitered about till the factories started. I went round a factory to discover means of access other than the factory gate. I found a place where the ground appeared high and scaling over the wall not difficult. I attempted a climb, but did not succeed. But my attempt had been noticed, and I was faced by a chowkidar, gun in hand. I pretended I needed employment, and being a new arrival did not know my way about. He was not satisfied, so he marched me into the presence of the Factory Manager. This was exactly what I wanted. What followed is obvious. The infringements at the factory were duly recorded and the usual action taken.

**Deliberate
Obstruction
has to be
faced, too**

I recall two instances of deliberate obstruction on my catching a factory red-handed, as it were, after surmounting the other difficulties. In the first case, as soon as I had got to the gin platform and started recording names of the women

at work, the electric lights were switched off and the machinery shut down. I proceeded to the factory office to record the incident in the Inspection Book, but the proprietor and the manager could not produce it; it was in the keeping of a clerk then off duty. So I wrote my notes on plain paper, and handed a copy to the proprietor for pasting in the Inspection Book. Next morning I carried out my inspection, and when I called for the Inspection Book for writing my remarks, was surprised to find that my note of the previous night had not been pasted in it. The proprietor and the manager both denied all knowledge of my visit the previous night; I had to repeat the surprise visit.

**Story of how
a Policeman
grew a Beard
to Escape
Punishment**

In the second case, as soon as I started recording names of women employed during prohibited hours, the proprietor and his colleagues overpowered me and the peon accompanying me and pushed us out of the factory. I sent for the local police, but no one turned up. I had no option but to return to my camp 20 miles away. The matter was placed in the hands of the C.I.D., who had the proprietor convicted. The policeman who had failed to respond to my summons however escaped punishment. As soon as he discovered that trouble was brewing for him, he started growing a beard, with the result that at an identification parade some months later, my peon was not able to pick him out.

**Then and
Now**

The incidents related above are over 15 years old. Since then, much improvement has taken place, thanks to the pioneer efforts of that period and to the spread of the Trade Union movement. Infringements of statutory provisions in respect of employment of women and children do occur; but they are far less frequent and far less widespread. The Factory Inspector is now able to spare more time for measures for the prevention of accidents and for the welfare of labour.

**Accidents are
Attributed to
Supernatural
causes**

In the matter of accidents, it is not realised that a large number of them are preventible. The general attitude is that accidents are a matter of "taqdir", or "kismet", or destiny, and measures which would help to prevent or reduce them are treated lightly. Here are some experiences in this sphere.

Some years ago I noticed that on an average there were four fatal accidents of a particular type (not arising from a

breach of statutory provisions) per year. A safety first poster had been devised, depicting this type of accident. But at most factories, this poster was either not displayed, or, if displayed, not conspicuously enough or in sufficient numbers. This laxity was noticed and corrected. In addition, workmen were constantly reminded of the hazard and their attention drawn to the poster from time to time. In the succeeding year not a single such accident was reported, and the improvement has been maintained to this day.

**Attitude
towards
Machine-
guards**

I had occasion once to suggest to an engineer of a factory the need for providing a guard over a particular part of a machine. He thought it unnecessary, as ordinarily no worker had to go to that side. I pointed out the hazard, but he slurred over it saying "if a worker is foolish enough to approach that part and be killed, others will learn from his folly". He did not mean what he said, and soon appreciated the suggestion when he was shown a Home Office pamphlet in which the part was shown as guarded. But it is an example of the attitude with which the Factory Inspector is at times confronted.

In a large factory a safety first committee had been inaugurated by me, and during the inaugural address I had shown by quoting facts and figures how the preventible type of accident had been reduced in other countries. After the function, the General Manager told me he thought the Committee was merely an eye-wash. Accidents would occur, if they are destined, Committee or no Committee. What hope can there be where this fatalistic attitude is displayed by the head of an institution.

**Indifference
is in the
Saddle even
Today**

I had suggested a set of safety-first posters to a factory manager, and on my next visit enquired if they had been displayed. Oh yes; not one set, but four such sets. On checking, I found that a large number had been displayed in the wrong departments. A typical example of how suggestions are acted upon.

Although goggles are provided to protect eyes in certain processes, workers have often been noticed without them. Supervisors would not bother. They would consider their duty done when goggles were provided; whether they were worn or not while at work was a matter of indifference to them.

**The Inspector
must be a
Very Human
Person**

From the foregoing it should not be concluded that the Factory Inspector is merely a policeman and a prosecutor. He is in fact much more. He must know not only the working of machinery but also the technical processes involved in the various existing industries and in the new ones coming up. This knowledge is necessary for a proper understanding and solution of problems relating to health and safety which arise from time to time. He needs, also to be a psychologist; to possess the spirit and zeal of a missionary, and a degree of humanity which will win the confidence of employees and the goodwill of employers. With these qualities he can, by advice and persuasion, achieve far more than is possible only by penal action.

THE INDIAN FACTORY SCENE

FACTORY INSPECTION, WHAT IT MEANS
AND HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE

A. B. CRAWFORD, M.C., D.F.C., B.Sc., (Hons.) Eng.
(London & Glasgow) A.M., I.M.E.,

Chief Adviser Factories, Government of India

"The picture I have painted is grim, very grim, but a true to life one. The quality of the canvas available is still unfortunately mainly rough and crude. Much time must elapse before fresh colours are produced which will enable us to put in bright and shining tones and give glowing life to our picture. That time will surely come, I have not the slightest doubt", is Mr. Crawford's unhesitant and forthright verdict. It is grim but challenging. It is an impeachment of the employer and the Factory Inspector and the State in one—an impeachment projected in an extremely helpful spirit; a story of how little or nothing has been done and how much there is to be done before the factory is made safe for the worker.

Noting the absence of even commonly accepted safe-guards on machines,

Mr. Crawford goes to the extent of recommending prohibition of the operation of such machinery until safe-guards have been provided. The standard of sanitation is low, "amounting almost to a lack of it". The worker thirsts for cleanliness but "the conditions are often against him"; factory conditions such as lighting, temperature and the like have not received adequate scientific attention; facilities for drinking water and washing are in most cases non-existent and, where they do exist, grossly insufficient; little or no attention is paid to occupational hazards and industrial diseases; industrial accidents are either ignored or even suppressed; with a few honourable exceptions, creches and canteens, where they exist, are "frankly dirty and most unattractive"; only a few establishments have Labour Officers but they are either unsuitable because of lack of the necessary equipment and training or are saddled with all sorts of extraneous duties. That is the picture.

LET ME SAY at the outset that it is not intended this paper should form the basis for a Manual of Training for Factory Inspectors, but rather to present my impressions of Indian factory conditions in so far as they relate to the Factories Act. These impressions have been noted during my tours throughout the country over the past year or so. All the criticisms will be made as constructive as possible, and it is hoped they may be of some assistance to Inspectors in shaping the future course of their work, and simultaneously further developing and strengthening an intelligent public opinion. For the most important factor in the development of national labour policy is public opinion, which expresses the attitude of an articulate section of a given society on a particular question. Public opinion is a dynamic force in modern society and forms the background of progressive social legislation in all democratic countries. Finally, let it be clearly understood that these criticisms are not intended to cast reflection upon the work of the Factory Inspectors. There are many factors involved and conditions resulting, over which Inspectors have little or no control,—factors and conditions which are deep-rooted, and to say the least of it, puzzling to me in the light of experience gained after some 25 years of active inspection in the U.K.,—and any criticism of their work would be an impertinence on my part.

What it means

Before dealing with the results of my inspections of Indian factories in detail, however, it will not be amiss if I gave some views on that oft-maligned individual, the factory inspector, as these may assist in building up an understanding of the causes of and reasons for the defects and criticisms which follow.

The Factory Inspector is made by experience

The primary duty of a factory inspector is to secure results. A law not enforced is of small value and instead of remedying or improving the evil, will only create disrespect or contempt for the law. It is for this purpose that factory inspection was created by the legislature. The inspector should have a thorough understanding of the law, and a well-grounded knowledge of mechanical principles; plus the ability to apply this knowledge to the many problems which confront him in advising employers as to the best methods of securing the health, safety and welfare of the workmen.

The chief activity of the inspection staff is educational work; first, in acquainting the employer with the requirements of the law; second, in advising him how to comply in a proper manner, with orders necessarily issued. This includes explaining each order, and how to comply with it, giving advice as to how to provide, construct and instal suitable guards for dangerous machinery, and how to remedy unhealthful and insanitary conditions. An understanding of the various machines in common use and their functions is of great value in determining the type of guard to be recommended, and of even greater value in explaining the need for its installation. Let me here emphasise, however, that factory inspectors are made chiefly by experience in that capacity. The highest initial qualifications do not make an officer a competent factory inspector from the start, on the other hand, a person of character and energy, even if his technical qualifications are not of a high order, can generally become competent after training.

**Each visit is
a lesson in
better
inspection**

Cultivation of the powers of observation should not be neglected and each visit to a factory should add to the inspector's fund of general information. If the inspector's power of observation is not properly developed he not only will be unable to impart correctly to occupiers and workers the knowledge required to improve conditions, but it is very questionable whether he himself will acquire the knowledge necessary in order to make an inspection of value. That proper inspection will reduce industrial accidents and diseases has been clearly demonstrated.

**A little tact
will do the
trick**

In the course of his work, the inspector meets many men of many minds and moods. Some welcome him, others do not conceal their intense willingness to say good-bye to him at the earliest possible moment. Some are agreeable, some are grouchy, and still others are just busy. His position, however, guarantess him a hearing and with an average supply of tact, he can usually overcome any apparent hostility. The attitude of the employer towards compliance with the requirements of the law is usually made evident early in the interview, and the inspector can shape his course accordingly, always keeping to the forefront the necessity for adequate protection of the health and safety of the employees. The greatest obstacle to safety progress is the feeling most people

have that accidents are a matter of luck or fate, and largely beyond human control. The average man can never picture himself as the victim of an accident. For this reason, the appeal to self-preservation in safety education is generally less effective than the call to protect fellow workers.

Most people are by nature conservative, and opposition to changes in the ordinary routine is one of the greatest obstacles the inspector has to overcome in his work. One hundred per cent co-operation is seldom met with in any walk of life, and the cheering section is noticeably absent when recommendations involving expenditures of money or effort are made. Again the attitude of the employer will usually furnish the inspector a valuable clue to the standard of compliance to be expected. Just as the average citizen occasionally needs to be pushed or praised to maintain a high standard of interest in matters which often deeply concern his own well-being, so the employer needs the urge or assistance of the inspector in maintaining the best possible conditions in the plant.

The old saying "well begun is half done" is peculiarly applicable to compliance work, and early compliance with the recommendations made should be insisted upon. The excuses offered for not having completed work will be many and varied, and not the least of the duties of the inspector will be to determine those that are legitimate, and find means to stimulate the activity of those employers who are inclined to be slow, or who lack interest.

**Respect
inspires
confidence
and confi-
dence begets
co-operation**

In enforcing the law, the inspector should be fair and use good judgement. He should always bear in mind that a cool head, and a clear and intelligent manner of expression are absolutely essential to the man who hopes to command the respect of those with whom he desires to establish co-operation. Without respect there can be no confidence, and without confidence there can be no co-operation. It is to the inspector's advantage to do his utmost to create a favourable impression of himself with employer and employees, for very often laws, and the departments charged with the enforcement of them are judged mainly by the departments' representatives who come in contact with the people in general. The inspector is the only representative of a Government department whom a great many employers or employees ever see at the factory.

If employer and employees are able to obtain correct information in regard to all factory laws affecting their industry from the inspector, and if they find he is able and willing to show them how they can comply with these laws in the most practical manner, and at a reasonable cost, they usually begin to show interest; they will have confidence in the ability of the inspector and they are more apt willingly to be guided by his opinions in the future. If at this time, the inspector endeavours to impress upon them clearly the fact that maintenance of high standards of safety, health and welfare, and strict observance of the laws regulating the hours of labour will eventually bring about a higher standard of efficiency than it would be possible to attain otherwise, he will find in many cases that they agree with him, and in any event a forward step has been taken towards securing co-operation.

**How it should
be done**

A fundamental principle of equitable distribution of national dividend is the improvement of working conditions, with special reference to sanitation, health, safety and hours of employment, which has, in fact been one of the main objects of labour legislation from the very beginning. In recent years, the question has, however, acquired a new significance for three reasons (1) the necessity of providing better conditions of work for increasing the efficiency of workers (2) the increasing complexity and intensity of the production process, necessitating greater safety and shorter hours (3) improvement in business organisation, industrial technique, safety devices and health measures, in which the workers rightly demand a share in the form of better conditions of work. One of the main objects of labour legislation is the conservation of national health, which is not only a basis for better manhood and womanhood, but also, in the long run, the primary condition of national wealth. As national wealth depends to a very large extent upon efficient labour power, any injury to workers' health is detrimental to the growth of national health. The health of workers in most factories is liable to deteriorate from several causes. Complicated machinery, running at high speed can result in great nervous strain; excessive heat or moisture, dust, fume, lack of proper lighting and ventilation, will usually prove injurious to health. Moreover, a number of occupations, by reason of the materials used, such as lead, silica, asbestos and so on,

will set up serious diseases unless proper precautionary measures are adopted against them. Closely connected with health is the question of safety, affecting large numbers of workers, and which is of great national importance. Every year an increasingly large number of workers is involved in industrial accidents in factories and mines, on railways and on board ship. Many are fatal, and a still greater number result in permanent disablement. It is largely the realisation of the importance of national health, and of the social and economic loss through disease, accidents and excessive hours of work that has led to the improvement of sanitary and safety conditions, and also to the reduction in hours of work in all advanced countries. Let us bear all these facts in mind as we analyse the conditions I have found during my tour of Indian factories.

1. *Cleanliness - Latrines & Urinals - Trade Waste & effluent*

I have no hesitation in stating that what remains most indelibly fixed in my mind, following my tours, is the extremely low standard of cleanliness, amounting almost to a complete lack of it, in the vast majority of the factories visited. Walls and ceilings were dusty and dirty and had quite obviously not been white washed for a number of years. Windows were so grimy as to be completely opaque. Ledges, shelves, lighting and other fixtures were covered with a thick accumulation of dirt. Floors were littered with all sorts of rubbish and refuse, and this had obviously been swept under machines and into corners of workrooms from time to time. Patches of oil and grease were found everywhere without exception. Many open drains inside the factories were completely choked with rubbish.

**Naturally
enough,
Workers
are driven to
the fields**

As for latrines and urinals, their condition, almost without exception beggars description. Many had obviously not been cleaned out for days on end. Some of the flushing arrangements had been out of order for months. In some cases, water for flushing was only available when the engine was running. Many receptacles were missing I doubt if many of them had been lime-washed since the day they had been built. In one factory, access to the latrines was completely blocked by a pile of scrap iron and old bricks. I have seen latrines and urinals totally unfit for use, and yet the doors of the factory were locked so that the workers could

not go into the adjoining fields. Many Managements went out of their way to explain that the workers preferred to use the fields. After viewing the appalling conditions of the latrines, and experiencing the disgusting stench arising from them, I can well understand the workers preference. Even in otherwise tolerable good factories, there were latrines without roofs, with no arrangements for daily cleansing, and where disinfectants were never used. Many latrines were hopelessly overcrowded. ✓ I noted seven (7) latrines for 1,420 workers and several factories where the provision was one latrine to upwards of 150 workers of both sexes without any attempt at segregation. In one instance, workers were not allowed to use latrines so as to avoid cleaning them. Urinals in most factories were conspicuous by their absence.

**Trouble lies
in employers
lack of
interest**

The unsolicited comment of the management in almost every instance, *anent* the above conditions, was to the effect that the workers themselves were to blame. I agree that the generally low standard of sanitation found outside the factory, coupled with illiteracy, may be a contributory factor, but in the absence of any really sustained effort by the management to maintain decent sanitary conditions inside the factory, one cannot expect workers to set an example. The trouble lies, I am convinced in the lack of interest shown by the employers. Until decent sanitary accommodation is provided, until an ample number of sweepers is engaged (in 12 factories the number of sweepers worked out at one per every 250 workers) and until managements, by routine daily inspections, satisfy themselves as to the condition of the latrines, there can be little hope of any real improvement.

**Stench and
stink**

The disposal of trade waste and effluent likewise gave cause for complaint in a number of factories. Admittedly, much though not all of the trouble lay outside the factory proper. But I deem it important because it has a direct bearing on the health and well-being of the workers, and also of the population of the adjoining area. I found very little evidence of a satisfactory method for the disposal of press mud, sullage water etc., in sugar factories, for example. As a result, the atmosphere was very foul. With the exception of the very large tanneries, fleshings were thrown about or piled up in various corners, until the stench was almost

unbearable. Outside one found the waste, water and fleshings, draining off into pools and ponds within 50 or 100 yards of the premises. The smell can readily be imagined. In rice mills, drains were generally choked with dirt, and soot and ashes from the husks burned in the furnace came out at the chimney and settled thickly everywhere in the compound; the surroundings were a mass of husk and rubbish; successive accumulations of water in the paddy soaking tanks set up an appalling smell. In some of the shellac factories, men were working in water which stank horribly and which, it appeared, had not been changed for over a fortnight. In some cases the effluent passed out through dirty open drains and accumulated in a ditch at the foot of the factory wall. The solution to this problem brings us back again to the matter of the maintenance of general cleanliness inside the factory, and the provision of sedimentation tanks, and contact bed, plus chlorination.

2. *Drinking Water and Washing Facilities*

Without losing sight of the essential fact that an ample supply of water is often a source of difficulty to the factory occupier, the general impression gained is that the arrangements for drinking and washing are extremely crude and unsatisfactory. In practically every case, the only provision was a few water taps totally inadequate in number. For example one factory employing 1,450 persons has only 2 water taps in the whole place. Another, with 250 men and 175 women had only 1 tap for each sex. A third, with 1,400 workers, had merely a well in the compound. As the result of congestion it was next to impossible for the worker to wash himself. Often the space around the tap was filthy; often it was situated in the open, with a complete lack of privacy. I cannot recollect a single instance of separate washing accommodation provided for women. The number of factories supplying cool drinking water was woefully small. Elsewhere, I found drinking water only available in jars, pots, drums etc. the latter almost invariably dirty, while the source of the supply was open to suspicion. In one instance water was provided for the office staff only, and the workers were not allowed access to it. In one factory, workers had to walk about 500 yards to the nearest water supply as the well in the factory had been out of action for some 7 or 8 months. In many factories, the workers had to find their

**He wants to
be clean but
cannot**

way to adjacent wells and ponds, which were often filthy from trade effluent, for the purpose of washing and bathing.

From observation, I believe the average Indian worker to be cleanly inclined, but the conditions are too often against this. It has been put to me that most workers waste a great quantity of water. I know of no more wasteful method than the ordinary tap. There is room for great improvement in the drinking water supply and washing facilities in Indian factories, -improvement which is capable of being carried out both quickly and at moderate cost

3. *Temperature, Ventilation and Lighting*

Apart from some cotton mills, I have come across very few examples of factories where any real attempt has been made to obtain reasonable working conditions by maintaining a suitable temperature and adequate ventilation. The ubiquitous single layer of corrugated iron for roof and sides of factory buildings appears to reign supreme in India, probably by reason of cheapness and ease of construction. Naturally unless the roof is very lofty, say of the nature of 30 feet high and over, the temperature inside is raised many degrees higher than it need be. In some of the newer factories, corrugated asbestos cement sheeting has been used instead, but its thermal resistivity is very little better than the iron sheeting. In blowing sheds of some glass works, temperature as high as 125° were recorded. Roofs were mainly of corrugated iron and very low, and the heat, almost without exception, was very oppressive. What appeared to be quite young children were observed literally exhausted, their faces covered in soot from the smoke of the furnaces. Some sugar factories gave equally high temperatures where leakage of steam from vacuum pans, uncovered hot juice tanks, and eliminators contributed to the very hot and humid conditions. Some of the rice mills were particularly bad. Buildings appeared quite unsuitable for use as factories, being old and small, so as to give the impression of cave-like structures, using artificial light at all times. Others had only a few holes in the wall for light and air. The huller coolies and machine-men had to go outside for fresh air roughly every 30 minutes or so. Some of the small tanneries were equally bad. In one tanning shed I saw upwards of 150 workers under a thatched roof whose

height at the eaves was only some 5 feet from the ground. Ventilation was completely lacking. In another, the roof was only 6½ feet high. The prevalent feature of the shellac factories was the low roofs over the ovens; the latter were spaced in several rows, the distance between each oven in a row being about 10 feet. Ventilation was negligible and the heat in summer terrific.

Over-crowding

In a number of instances, the conditions were accentuated by congestion of workers and machinery. I found several instances of overcrowding in foundries, smithies, joiners' shops, fitting and machine shops. Two engineering factories, each employing about 2,000 workers, gave 14 square feet and 12 square feet per worker respectively. In some of the smaller printing works, congestion was particularly bad, especially in the lead casting, stereo casting, and monotype machine rooms. Here are some of the details noted (1) 10 workers occupying 1,050 cubic feet (room 15 feet x 7 feet x 10 feet high); (2) 6 workers in a room 9 feet x 6 feet x 8 feet (576 cubic feet); (3) 3 workers in a room 8 feet x 7 feet x 10 feet (187 cubic feet). In a room 6 feet x 6 feet x 8 feet a monotype machine was at work. There was a complete absence of ventilation and the atmosphere was choking.

Cool air for workers

Apart from a few cotton mills, I found only two factories where cool air was supplied to workers at hot processes, and I doubt very much if the possibilities of capillary air washing and evaporative cooling are either known or understood to any extent in India. Of the two instances mentioned, I found the benefits obtained were comparatively negligible. In one, the cool air was delivered through grids in the floor. The duct ran close to steam pipes which naturally raised the delivery temperature, while the effects of the air were further offset by the fact that the steam presses being operated were completely unlagged. In the second instance, the cool air was delivered across the cooling bank on which hot steel sheets were placed, with the result that a blast of hot air was being delivered to the men operating the sheet mills.

Must be tackled without delay

I am definitely of the opinion that the matters of temperature and ventilation in factories should be tackled without delay. Consideration will have to be given to the construction of buildings, particularly roofing. A double roof with an air space between has been suggested as a solution to the single

layer of corrugated iron. With modern developments in insulation, e.g. fibre glass, gyproc, asbestos board and so on, there seems ample scope for attempted improvements. Other considerations are higher roofing, and orientation of factory buildings.

Standard of lighting leaves much to be desired

The general standard of lighting must be deemed very low, and in this connection dirty windows and dirty lighting fixtures played a big part. Many lamps were completely unshaded or had the now old-fashioned shallow metal reflector. The effect of the glare on workers' eyes, especially in processes requiring accuracy and close perusal of the work must be considerable. I will make further reference to this under occupational diseases. Particular attention was drawn to this in printing works, where badly spaced fittings carrying 20-25 watt bulbs were found in use in the lino and mono-type machine rooms: and even, in some instances, in form-setting. In a lace factory using jacquard looms, I found only a few crude oil lamps in use, and it was difficult to understand how the weavers could possibly manage to produce any work at all. One hot rolling mill was in complete darkness, and the men had to rely on the glare given off by the red hot metal. Lighting in some of the older jute and cotton mills remains poor, although some good examples of newly-installed fluorescent tubular lighting has been noted in such factories. Even where this has been done, however, I consider the standard, namely $3\frac{1}{2}$ - 4 foot candles, to be decidedly on the low side.

4. *Accidents and Industrial Diseases - Statistics*

In assessing the fencing of machinery in factories, I have endeavoured to bear in mind various points of view that have been placed before me during the course of my inspections. These views have related mainly to (a) a claimed difference between Indian and U.K. plant operation--slower tempo of work, fewer machines per man, smaller amount of clothing worn and so on; (b) absence of any incidence of accidents on particular machines. In spite of all this, I remain unconvinced. I have seen very many shafts, pulleys, and belts completely unguarded, and reputedly dangerous machines like power presses and circular saws in use without any kind of fencing. Industrial countries all over the world have long recognised the toll of accidents on such unfenced machinery

and I cannot believe that India stands alone in this connection. Careful perusal of the "Annual Reports of Chief Inspectors over a period of years reveals that accidents have occurred, although the frequency rates are comparatively small. It is freely admitted, however, that the reporting of accidents by factory occupiers is still very imperfect. Remembering this, and taking into account the different conditions of labour employment in Indian factories e.g. the large numbers of workers who have no contact or approach to machinery and plant, I believe that the frequency rate is not really so attractive as it appears to be. The general standard of existing fencing is in my opinion, low. On all hands, I have been met with the glib explanation that materials are in such short supply that guards can neither be made nor improved. Frankly, I consider this has been all too readily seized upon by occupiers as an excellent excuse for not carrying out fencing requirements, and too readily accepted by Inspectors. Surely, human life and limb can never, under any circumstances, be offset against, a mere physical, practical consideration. Even at the height of the War effort in the U.K. when all materials were in very short supply this fact was not allowed to outweigh the need for the fullest adequate protection of the worker in every phase of his or her work. I would suggest that the time has arrived for much stronger action to be taken—even to the extent of prohibiting machines to be used until the necessary safeguards have been fitted.

**Blessed are
the ignorant**

In assessing occupational disease, one is handicapped by the complete absence of statistics relating to it. That it is present, in various forms, peculiar to particular industries, I have not the slightest doubt, as the result of my inspections. And yet, in factory after factory, managers and doctors assured me that "None of the diseases of the workers can be called occupational". Let me outline some of the conditions, I have found. In printing works, I have examined numerous workers at the lino and mono type machines, lead melters and type setters. Without exception, their gums have been spongy and marked by a decided blue line. In addition, the records of the works' dispensaries showed numerous cases of colic. Headache and a few instances of "wrist-drop", further confirmed that these workers suffered from lead poisoning. The conditions under which these people

were working were fully conducive to ill health. Congestion and bad lighting necessitated their stooping over machines until only a few inches from the metal melting pots, which were either provided with badly-designed hoods for fume removal or were completely open. Furnace rooms were small and full of lead dust and fume. Type cases were filthy and only occasionally cleaned by *blowing* instead of exhausting. Lack of washing conveniences meant that food was eaten with hands dirty from contact with metal type.

Air they breathe is dust-ridden

The conditions found in the mixing or "batching" rooms of glass works were such that the workers must inevitably suffer from silicosis. Ill-lit and badly ventilated, the air in these rooms was invariably just a dust cloud, and occupiers appeared to consider the wearing of a small piece of cloth over the nose and mouth to be ample protection. Silicosis must like-wise arise in the grinding and mixing rooms in potteries, where the dirty conditions were deplorable but no statistics are available. It may be of some significance that in 2 factories the workers with service of less than 5 years were 85% and 78% respectively of the total employees, while in others an absentee figure of over 50% was common. Of other statistics available in the glass works, I noted: (a) a high incidence of asthma and bronchitis among blowers and helpers causing much absenteeism in the winter months; (b) pleurisy and pneumonia in furnace workers due, it is stated, to their running outside frequently into the fresh air, especially when it was raining; (c) a very high incidence of eye trouble, arising from glare from the furnaces, and also burns from lime.

In sugar factories, I found evidence of chronic throat trouble, due to the leakage of sulphur dioxide from the sulphur stoves and sulphitation tanks, and a number of cases of asthma. The hands of workers at the liming tanks showed numerous scars.

A matter of concern

The conditions in various chemical works gave rise for some considerable concern. Cases of gassing in the manufacture of bleaching powder in one concern totalled 3—4 per week and there was some evidence that patients were unconscious for anything up to 24 hours. In a paint factory, the air was thick with lead dust, there was a high record of colic, washing conveniences were negligible, and it was asserted that many

workers "disappeared" after some 5 or 6 months at the factory. A few concerns admitted to some cases of chrome ulceration, and seemed to take pride in the fact that coconut oil was given to these patients. The only statistics available came from one factory with 500 workers which gave treatment to 940 cases in a month, including 175 for accidents and 78 for "skin diseases".

In rice mills, very dusty conditions are prevalent as has been referred to earlier. Here I found plenty of evidence of coughing and lung trouble, with sickness and expectoration of blood, among the husk coolies and also, rather significantly, the drivers of oil engines but not steam engines. There was also a high proportion of eye cases among the few statistics available.

A shocking record

In spite of the extremely poor conditions in many of the tanneries, I could not obtain any evidence of cases of anthrax. That there have been cases I have no doubt. In several of these works, I was informed that when they fell ill, workers returned to their homes in the country, as they had no faith in the allopathic system of treatment available. Hence all record of them was lost. In the chrome two bath process, there was some record of ulceration to hands and feet, and lime burns at the pits were common. For these injuries, the treatment seemed to be vaseline, mustard oil or wax. Of the available statistics, 1,000 workers, I found approximately 1,000 attendances at the dispensary in 10 weeks. Of these, 130 were treated for ulcers and other sepsis on hands and feet, and 180 for burns.

In shellac works, I was again unable to get any record of occupational disease. There was, however, definite evidence of cough and chest complaint among the furnace workers, while the latter also suffered from eye trouble and cramped fingers. The feet of lac washers were very tender, so that many of them walked with some difficulty. On one aspect of the manufacture, I could obtain no information, namely the use of high proof alcohol solvents in the extraction process. Fume is given off but the effect on the health of the workers could not be ascertained. Some enquiry on this point would appear advisable.

Scientific enquiry

It is obvious from the foregoing that there is an immediate necessity for very considerable enquiry into occupational

disease. The difficulty is that of obtaining doctors with the requisite amount of knowledge of industrial diseases. From observation, those doctors already attached to factories, are confined by necessity to duty inside the works hospitals and dispensaries, and have no knowledge of what goes on inside the works. They will, in the first instance, have to be given some guidance as to the obvious diseases to be expected in their particular factories, and the nominal treatment and combating of them. There should be compulsory notification of even suspected cases.

**Better
Reporting of
accidents**

There will have to be a considerable tightening up in the reporting of accidents. The reasons put forward by some firms for the paucity of records were naive to say the least of it. One firm of electrical engineers claimed that because the nature of the industry called for precision work, the chances of accident were rare. In printing works it was said that because the machinery was not complicated or elaborate, there were few accidents.

**They are
ignored and
suppressed**

The statement "No accidents" may mean this, but I am more inclined to believe that it means they are simply ignored and suppressed. So far as I could gather, many firms are not insured against accident. It has been freely admitted to me that workers who know about compensation for accident and disease are afraid to claim payment either from the firm or by going to court for fear of losing their jobs. Some attempt has been made to obtain uniformity in the classification of reported accidents, but, in my opinion, it is not satisfactory. I would strongly advise the formation of a *Central Statistical Branch*, whose first task would be to draw up standard forms for reported accident causations in the Provincial Inspectorates. All annual statistics of the Provinces and States should be received by this Central branch for its study and observation. Similar methods will have to be adopted for occupational diseases.

5. Dust and Fume Removal

I must deal with this subject as a particular item because of its extreme importance in relation to industrial disease, and because of the almost complete absence of even attempted removal. Each and every kind of dust or fume carries its own particular health accident or explosion hazard. You

will find dust and or fumes in practically every industry—cotton, jute, engineering, printing, paper, tea, rice, chemicals, pottery, glass, tanneries, rubber, and paint to mention only a few. To prevent evolution of dust or fume, the obvious first solution is complete enclosure of the offending process. Where this is not practicable,—but only then—localised exhaust ventilation should be provided; the idea behind this is to capture the dust or fume *as near as possible* to its point of origin by means of concentrated air currents flowing into suitable exhaust hoods. The collected material is then sucked away through ducting by a fan and passes to a filtration plant. I have seen a number of such plants installed in Indian factories but have yet to see a really efficient one in operation. The same fault is repeated over and over again—the hood set too high above the source; as a result, the influence of draughts from open windows and doors, and ceiling fans has resulted in the dust or fume by-passing the hood. It is for this same reason that I do not consider the use of a hood and duct without a fan to be an efficient proposition in India, although I have seen a number of such installations. In the absence of exhaust appliances, many factories have drawn my attention to the fact that the workers were either supplied with or were wearing respirators. I cannot too strongly emphasise (1) the respirator can only be accepted as the *last line of defence* (2) the “respirators” in every instance proved to be crude affairs consisting of pieces of cloth tied over the nose and mouth. Enough has been said earlier to indicate the vital necessity for tackling the removal of dust and fume without delay, but as a further example let me instance a cement factory, where the dusty conditions at the bagging plant were deplorable, and where the manager admitted that 20% of his production was lost in dust.

6. *Protective Clothing*

In general it can safely be asserted that protective clothing is conspicuous by its absence. In a few instances, rubber gloves and boots had been provided for workers at chrome and nickel plating baths and acid pickling tanks. These men worked on stagings set above the ground level, whereas women sweepers walked barefoot in water contaminated by acid underneath. In several factories, e.g. glass works, and

wire and nail mills, where cuts were numerous, men and women went barefooted. It may be of some significance that the labour turnover in these places was as high as 25%–30%. In only one factory did I find goggles issued to men working with acids.

7. *Medical Services*

Many factories have provided dispensaries with doctors, of various qualifications in attendance daily or less often. Here both workers and their families are given treatment. Some give allopathic treatment, others homeopathic, others again Ayurvedic and Unani; a few give both allopathic and Ayurvedic treatment. I cannot express any opinion on the merits or otherwise of these systems. But I would question the efficacy of providing in one glass factory, homeopathic treatment only for the cuts and burns which were very prevalent.

As dirty as could be

Many dispensaries were extremely dirty. Few offered any real privacy to the patients. Stocks of medicines, and dressings were observed on open shelves covered with dust and dirt. Refrigerators intended to hold special drugs etc. were often littered with soiled dressings. First Aid Boxes were invariably found empty. Maternity and other wards in the hospitals attached to works were more often than not, dirty and badly ventilated. Much of the bedding was obviously filthy. The method of serving meals appeared anything but hygienic. In several cases, trays of food were laid down on the verandah for 5 or 10 minutes before being taken inside to the patients. In the interval flies, birds and dogs, had settled round the food. Many patients appeared to be expected to get up and take their meal squatting on the ward floor.

Periodic medical examination of the workers is only done in a very few factories. Many do, however, examine workers when they commence employment in the factory. No facts were obtainable as to the effects of such examination, the number of persons rejected, grounds of rejection and so on.

It has been stated to me that some doctors are instructed by their firms not to prescribe expensive medicines for the workers, and that consequently a few cheap stock medicines only are kept in the dispensaries. I have not been able to confirm this, but I can instance one concern, employing 1,000

workers, whose total expenses for a year in the dispensary were only Rs.2,000.

8. *Creches, Canteens and Rest Shelters*

The number and size of the creches provided is comparatively small in relation to the number of women employed in factories. Of those I have seen, the layout and conditions in them varied considerably. Some were excellent, if small, others were frankly dirty and most unattractive, while the facilities given left much to be desired. Similar remarks apply to canteens.

Many factories provided no form of rest shelter for the workers, in others, the shelter was crude and unsatisfactory. In most instances it consisted of a corrugated iron structure, far too small for the number of workers who might use it. Invariably there was no provision for ventilation. I found only one example fitted with fans. Similarly many had neither chairs nor tables, which entailed squatting on a dirty "katcha" floor. Part of the space in some had been pressed into service as godowns. One result of the faults outlined in these shelters is that workers are found in the compounds having their meals at all hours of the day.

9. *Labour Officers*

Many factories have no labour officer, the tasks generally given to such officials being carried out by the manager. The work done by such labour officers as have been appointed falls far short, however, of what I should expect. In some concerns, he dealt only with recruitment of workers, wage complaints and fines. In others he supervised the distribution of uniforms to the staff and the sanitation of the workers' colony. In general it would appear that he has no special functions, but deals with ordinary problems of recruitment, promotions and salary scales, and almost inevitably, a vast amount of clerical work including some statistics. Too often he can only make recommendations, the final decisions being left to the management. I believe many of them through lack of the necessary facilities, have not received sufficient training. There is undoubtedly a great need for a much higher standard in this important work and for a much better recognisance of its importance and value by managements.

It is a grim picture

Here then is the "how" of factory inspection, —the jobs that have to be tackled with boundless energy, enthusiasm and determination if improvement is to be attained. The picture I have painted is grim, very grim, but a true to life one. The quality of the canvas available is still unfortunately mainly rough and crude. Much time must elapse before fresh colours are produced which will enable us to put in the bright and shining tones and give glowing life to our picture. That time will surely come, I have not the slightest doubt.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES AND INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE IN INDIA

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Science has not yet come to the aid of the Indian worker. Research may conceivably enlarge the field of occupational diseases ; but even in the case of listed diseases the worker's interests go by default because nobody bothers about him and perhaps, he himself, blames a perverse and unkind fate. Some diseases which are compensable in countries like America have yet to be scheduled in India. Administrative machinery for enforcing the Workmen's Compensation law, such as it is, is lax. It is not obligatory on the part of industry to employ medical men. In the large majority of cases "the worker goes

back to his farm or dies in the village". This is Dr. M. N. Rao's indictment.

He actually gives the case history of a worker, who because of lack of scientific assistance over a period of fourteen years of his life as a worker, except when it was almost too late, well, passed on. (Is it murder?)

Dr. Rao mentions how in the Kolar Gold Fields when no cases of Silicosis were reported, before the introduction of the Mysore Silicosis Rules in 1940, some scientists went to the extent of explaining the absence of the dread disease by new theories of the origin of silicosis. But enforcement of the Rules gave the lie and thousands of cases now come up before the Compensation Commissioner, year after year.

A recent survey made by the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health has revealed that "the incidence of active tuberculosis in the jute textile industry increases six-fold as the worker moves from his village to the industrial environment". Is not the responsibility for the aggravation of the disease to be placed at Industry's door? The Institute has actually a scheme for introducing Mass Chest Radiography as a preventive method of detecting early cases among industrial workers in India.

The present position, in all conscience, is distressing. The "Daridra Narayana" of India bears a heavy cross.

**Life and
work of
"Daridra
Narayana"**

THE HEALTH of the Industrial worker is looming large in the minds of the modern Indian—be it a politician, a labour leader, a health officer or the industrial worker himself. To consider the various aspects of Industrial Hygiene, in such a small sized review as this, would not be doing justice to any of them. Hence it is proposed to exclude from this note that very important aspect of the health of the industrial worker—his environment outside the factory premises. Omission to give due weightage, in an overall picture of an industrial worker in health administration to important items like housing, protected water supply and essential sanitary environment would exhibit only an ignorance of basic public health standards. He lives in his home environment, the 'bustee', for more than two-thirds of his life as an industrial worker, drinks unfiltered water and eats an unbalanced diet, all outside the factory, thus exposing himself to all the diseases attributable to lack of clean air, water and food, the three essential pre-requisites of public health. The industrial worker is first a citizen and only a worker next. But he is a citizen with a high premium, the nucleus around which is crystalised industrialisation, the basic essential for increasing the standard of living of the 'Daridra Narayana' of tomorrow.

**Incidence of
Venereal
diseases**

It is also not proposed to discuss here that important sociological aspect of the worker's health which legitimately cannot be considered in this note—his home life vs. venereal disease. For more reasons than one the average industrial labourer in India does not have a good home in the factory area. He is a villager and lured by city life and factory wages is attracted to the industrial environment. He comes single and stays in a dormitory always having his permanent home in the village which he usually visits during the harvest season or once in two or three years. The industrial areas usually have therefore a predominantly higher ratio of nearly three or four males to every female, and all the concomitant problems of social hygiene and increased incidence of venereal diseases follow. It is not surprising to note that a survey by medical officer 1, of a very well-known and established Indian industry recently showed an annual venereal incidence rate of 3% amongst its workers. It is needless to say that

the average rate for all India would be much higher, and that this is a pressing important problem concerning the health of the industrial worker.

And in the note below, the discussion is limited therefore only to those aspects of the workers health in relation to the industry – or the subject of occupational health.

By the term occupational illness is usually meant the illness the worker develops during, contributed by or as a direct result of his gainful employment in the industry. This illness again may be either in the form of an accident or disease.

INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

Science has yet to come to the worker's aid

Industrial accidents are an important aspect of the industrial hazards. The worker while feeding a machine with raw material has his hand caught up and before the machine is stopped by an alarm his fingers are crushed. The surgeon immediately comes to the rescue and saves his life perhaps by amputating the fingers. The plastic surgeon comes later to help to minimise the effects of the accident and rehabilitate him in order that he may continue to be a useful member of the community. The allied fields of safety organisation and industrial psychology are also well developed specific fields. The safety organisation develops the machine gadgets so that they are safe to be handled by the worker or even if the machine cannot be so designed methods are devised by which the moving parts could be effectively shielded from the worker. The industrial psychologist comes on the scene to elicit why it is that only this worker amongst all his other colleagues happened to have this unfortunate accident and had his finger amputated. Is he one of those that are accident prone? Or is it because he is not able to apply himself wholeheartedly due to an unhappy home or an unsympathetic foreman? Or is the accident a sign of boredom or fatigue?

It is thus that these three, industrial safety, traumatic surgery and industrial psychology have become specialities, but the Indian worker of 1947 has yet to be given the benefit of these.

The Safety Engineer is a rarity

There is a Safety First Association in Bombay, another in Calcutta, but these are rather small, and inadequate to serve the entire nation. It is only an exception to find a safety

engineer in any of the large-sized factories. Nearly 60% of the workers in Greater India (Indian Union, Pakistan and States) are employed in factories employing 1,000 or more workers who can certainly afford a safety engineer on their pay roll. Only some of the bigger mine groups like coal and gold mines have some skeleton safety organisations. The miner's rescue stations at Asansol and Dhanbad could be mentioned as examples. These were started recently during emergency of the World War II under the auspices of the miners' welfare fund and can be improved.

**It is not
obligatory to
employ a
medical man
in industry**

Though the field of traumatic surgery is wide, the Indian worker is peculiarly placed not to have the benefits of this specialised field. Even the general medical facilities available to him in his community outside the factory are inadequate and the available services in the industry are no better. Practically nowhere is it incumbent on any industries to employ a medical man in industry and the large majority of industrial establishments are not financially stable enough to afford the expense of a part time or whole time doctor. Nearly 70% of the factories are small sized and employ only less than hundred workers. And the 'model' factory (different from the average factory) i. e. the most frequent size factory one comes across (nearly 20% of all factories) in India employs less than thirty employees. This problem of medical service in the small sized factory is not peculiar to India only. But in progressive and more industrialised countries like U.S.A. they try to solve the problem by inaugurating co-operative medical service. With the rapidly increasing community strength of the Indian medical profession, one can hope that in the not too distant future, general medical service including the special field of traumatic surgery would be available.

**Industrial
Psychology
yet to be born**

The third preventive measure, the subject of Industrial psychology is yet to be born in India. Perhaps it is just conceived, The labour department of the Central Government has recently organised a skeleton organisation. The Indian Research Fund Association, a quasi-Government organisation financed by the Central Government for medical research for nearly a quarter of a century is now taking active interest in industrial health problems. It is at present financing an industrial health research unit which comprises an industrial psychologist.

INDUSTRIAL DISEASES

In view of the fact that each accident does not extend over a period of years but happens at the moment requiring immediate attention, there is something definite and localised about industrial accidents. Unlike industrial accidents which are sudden and dramatic industrial diseases are more subtle and less dramatic but more hazardous. There is as much difference between the two as between the victim of a motor car accident who is the focus of attraction in the street, the press and the police and the chronic malaria patient dying in an out of the way village. The former attracts the doctor and the public whereas the latter has to seek the doctor and the community. If either of these types of hazards continues, the attention of the State is drawn to the former, whereas the State has to do a malaria survey to get at the latter. The former is latent and the latter patent.

The industrial diseases could be of many types. They may be very indirect and vague or they might be common diseases which take a more serious turn in the industrial worker or there might be diseases which the worker develops on the spot.

**Unchartered
sea of
industrial
diseases**

The unskilled worker carries weight from place to place at the spot or may have to help the overhead crane. During these operations he strains. The intra-abdominal pressure increases and any weak point in the walls yields and a hernia results. The commonest of these is the inguinal hernia which is estimated to be as frequent as one in every thirteen workers (No Indian figures available). Hence this disease is as much an occupational disease as pneumoconiosis and is therefore compensable by labour legislation in the United States of America but not yet in India. There may even be some other less obvious diseases which are not compensable by law in a country, but still having an occupational origin e.g., chronic peptic ulcer. This disease is common in certain groups in the community, the industrial workers among them. He has to perforce change his dietary habits whenever he changes shifts of hours of work and has therefore the tendency of a frequent gastric upset. On the top of this any psychological factor like anxiety could easily establish a chronic duodenal ulcer in the worker. The common experience of the factory physician in India is that the large

majority of his patients come for gastro-intestinal diseases. But unfortunately the large majority of these are amongst the group of dysenteries and diarrhoeas and it is as futile to search for any occupational gastric troubles among them as to search for a copper coin in the muddy Hooghly river bottom during monsoon.

Worker's case goes by default

The second group of industrial diseases have a more direct bearing and though they also are not always compensable they are more serious and more common. Tuberculosis is a disease of the poor, the overcrowded and the under-nourished. The Indian worker is all in one. A recent survey at the All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health has indicated that the incidence of active tuberculosis in the Jute Textile industry, one of the foremost amongst the Indian industries, increases six-fold as the worker moves from his village to the industrial environment. Moreover, the worker is inhaling the dusts and fumes in the industry which carry a load on his lungs and which lower his natural resistance to any other infections including the important disease Tuberculosis. There may in fact be some dusts amongst these, for example the dust breathed by the sand-blaster, the deep miner or the stone-grinder, wherein the dust positively attracts the tubercle bacilli to settle and multiply in the lung. Such diseases are in a strict sense positively compensable. But even a more glaring compensable occupational diseases and accidents amongst the Indian workers are escaping attention due mainly to a lax administrative machinery. Unless there is incumbent pressure for action it may take generations before these cases are detected in the interests of industrial health leaving alone worker's compensation.

Mass chest Radiography

In similar circumstances more progressive industries and health administrations abroad, take pains to X-ray the lungs of the industrial workers before and during employment. For example a new worker in a Tuberculosis Sanatorium who moves about in an environment of tuberculous patients is likely to contract tuberculosis. In Sananac Lake Sanatorium in Upstate, New York, one of the earliest Sanatoria to be established, students are X-rayed before and during their internment so that any subsequent infection detected can be attributable to their occupation. Similarly a Jute

worker who falls an easier victim to Tuberculosis due to his occupation could certainly claim a similar pre-caution. Leaving alone the materialistic gain he gets as and when tuberculosis is declared a compensable disease, the early detection conserves life and property. A large majority of these cases get worse when not detected early by X-ray and require Sanatorium treatment which is beyond their means and which the State has necessarily to finance. This all important preventive method of detecting early cases of pulmonary tuberculosis or such common occupational chest diseases as Silicosis is made very economic by the development of mass chest radiography. With the proper power supply and X-ray machine the cost of the film and the developing expenses come to the ridiculously low figure of one and a half annas for X-raying one worker. The All-India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health at Calcutta in co-operation with the Indian Research Fund Association is trying to initiate this important public health measure in the Indian industries.

**The more
common ones**

The third group of industrial diseases are directly attributable to the place of work or the occupational diseases in the narrow strictest sense. He is working constantly with an irritant and develops dermatitis, which is a common occupational disease of tender skins. He breathes daily the noxious fumes and develops a chronic bronchitis. There are lead fumes about and daily minute doses of lead accumulate in the system and bring about tissue changes. The dusty process he is working in leads to silicosis. All these and a host of others are included in the list "occupational diseases".

The way these diseases are tackled in more advanced industrialised countries is both by prevention and cure.

If there is a hazard, what is the type of hazard? Perhaps the hazard could be substituted by something less harmful in the industrial process. But if the substance i. e. like Benzene, is a solvent which is an essential part of the industrial process, could the process be completely enclosed so that the workers' environment is free from the hazard? If so how best and if not how fast could the hazardous fumes and vapours be exhausted away from the worker? And as a check up after all these how many parts per million of the

hazardous substance is detected in the air after doing an industrial air analysis? Is this a safe permissible concentration? These and similar other questions are solved by the Industrial Hygienist. But in spite of these various preventive measures by the Industrial hygienist, the occupational disease manifests itself, the Industrial Physician, specialised in the field of Industrial Medicine steps in to cure the disease. Thus the preventive fields of Industrial hygiene and the curative field of industrial medicine are available to the more fortunate worker in U. K. and U. S. A.

**But here
in India.....**

But it is a different story in the case of the Indian worker. The conditions in India can be best described by taking out a case from the records of this department.

**This is what
happens**

S. Azis, a thirty year old intelligent Bengali lad was working in one of the metal industries in Greater Calcutta area since he was fourteen. He had been doing the same type of job near molten metal continuously for these fifteen years, though according to him many others doing the same job before him or with him could not stand the job as long. Some of them were supposed to have died prematurely also. Up to 1944 he was in good health and had a good record of work. But in 1944 he was bed-ridden for nearly 7—8 months. During this time he had unsatisfactory treatment from the factory physician as well as the local practitioner. He did not recover his normal health at the end of this period but he could not hold out further without pay as he had a family of four to feed. On 29-3-45 he went to his employers who informed him that he was not fit for service and hence could not be entertained. Subsequently he was rapidly going downhill in health. (In the large majority of such instances the worker goes back to his farm or dies in the village.) This lad, however, was intelligent enough to think of his Labour Union. It was fortunate that his labour union was unusual in having an administration, which considered one of its duties to supervise the health of its workers. Even before negotiating with his employer, S. A. was referred to this department by the President of the Labour Union.

At the time of his reporting to us in February 1946, he was acutely ill, very much emaciated (present weight—41 seers, former weight 2 years ago 52 seers) and complaining

of a series of symptoms, severe headache, burning stomach, constipation alternating with diarrhoea, indigestion, shooting pains in the abdomen, cramps in hands and feet, weakness and palpitation of heart and burning sensation during micturition, cough and fever. His condition might have been lead or other metallic poisoning or even silicosis. The only way of correct diagnosis was by going into the exact details of the type of his work or eliciting, the different hazards he was exposed to by industrial air analysis and also by clinical examination including the examination of the most affected tissues for the hazardous substance. But in this case the patient was so acutely ill that he had to be hospitalised at first before he could be treated for his occupational diseases. He was to have been admitted the next day but he did not turn up.

Subsequent follow up indicated that the patient died soon after—the death however could not be verified.

The case may not be the type of occupational disease that one commonly comes across. But still it is a model case for indicating the different forces that resulted in the death of this industrial worker for no fault of his own.

**Good
intention and
poor execution
by the state**

The history strongly indicates he died of an occupational disease. The State has a well-planned Workmen's Compensation Act wherein all the common compensable diseases are listed. But it is recognised by every body that the diseases compensated in any part of India since the promulgation of the Act in 1922 are hardly handful. The reason is obvious. The law provides for compensation. There are patients with compensable diseases. The administrative machinery for enforcing the law is not there. There are good intentions and poor execution. The following example indicates the force of the argument.

In the Mysore Gold Mines, for example. It is recognised in all the gold mines of the world that nearly 1% of the underground workers suffer from the usually fatal occupational disease, silicosis. Never was a case reported from Mysore, however. This unusual finding was actually taken for granted by academic scientists who even explained this by new theories about the origin of silicosis. But actually when the Mysore Silicosis Rules, framed, under the Mysore

Workmen's Compensation Act of 1928 came into force in 1940, cases actually in existence all these years, came to the limelight; the first year 402, the second year 644 and the third year 778 cases!

**The present system—
Faulty**

Thus it is obvious that the Act is elaborate and fairly thorough and the object is praiseworthy. But the present system does not provide the means to achieve the object of the Act viz., payment of compensation for one who developed a compensable disease. One of the obvious causes of this state of affairs is that the full time Factory Inspector, looking after the provisions of the Factory Acts is usually an engineer. And it is too much to expect from an engineer to be able to diagnose compensable diseases, the domain of a medical man.

The Medical Officer not trained

The second factor that can be considered is the medical man in industry. The average medical man in industry hardly interests himself in anything beyond the general outdoor cases. In only a very few instances have I come across a medical officer having regular rounds in the factory as a preliminary to look for any occupational disease. One must be conversant with the occupations in his factory before one can diagnose occupational diseases. It may be sometime before the average industrial medical officer in India could be trained in occupational diseases, their prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Economic value of the worker's life very low

Even if the occupational disease is diagnosed in time the third factor that comes into picture is the low economic value of the Indian industrial workers. Indian Industries are not yet fully mechanised. So a good percentage of the workers are unskilled labourers whom the industrialist does not consider the best type of capital for his industry. He could therefore afford a high turn-over in his workers. Even if one of them develops a compensable disease, it is much cheaper to get rid of the worker by paying him the compensation rather than spend for the preventive measures like an exhaust hood or a face mask. Hence for the employer to have good economic inducement to use them, the economic value of the workers life must be increased either by legislation or by increasing his standard of living.

What Unions ought to do

The average worker in India is the type who tries to do the job as best as he can for the petty income he derives. He is inarticulate and not well versed with his rights as a useful

member of the community. Hence the labour unions in India have got a great part to play in educating the worker to a consciousness of his interests and the employer to his responsibilities. The particular case, given above I am sure, could not have been taken care of by the large majority of the Labour Organisations in the country. Even in this case where the Labour Union did take active interest it could not proceed beyond a point. At least not so far as to avert the economic plight of the family during the last stages of his life.

The Industrial responsibility

The Indian industrialist can always take a lesson from the British and American industries or from the average British and American owned industries in India. He has to consider the worker, whatever his economic value, the most important wheel in his industrial machine and realise that the initial extra money he spends in the preventive measures will pay not only in the diminished compensation costs but more satisfaction, better relations, more output per capita and more profits. Actual cost accounting on such lines was attempted in some industries and it was found that such service pays more in the long run.

The more enlightened industrialist along with the State can go even a step further. The average and the mode of the Indian Factory may be small but big industrial, jute, cotton or engineering centres like Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta or Lahore could establish a hospital for the industrial workers where, along with other diseases, industrial accidents and diseases could be treated on scientific lines.

WAGE STRUCTURE IN INDIAN INDUSTRIES

DR. RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

Lucknow University

Professor Radhakamal Mukerjee's thesis is that certain definite norms of consumption and welfare requirements should form the basis of minimum wage standards. Placing first things first, the professor asks for fixation of minimum wage standards for women and children in the sweated industries, in mines and plantations and, thereafter, progressively covering the whole gamut of industrial workers. He wants minimum wage regulations which do not provide absolute standards but set up machinery to adjust wages to variations in the cost of living and changes in economic conditions. He asks for live and not wooden standards.



THE STRUCTURE of wages in every industrial country reflects its social and economic development. Nothing shows more vividly India's industrial backwardness and the predominantly agricultural character of the Indian working class than the chaotic and unbalanced character of the Indian wage structure.

**Employment—
a comparison
between India
and some
Metropolitan
countries**

In all modern industrial communities of the world, the highest wage scales are represented by irksome, difficult and dangerous employment. The highest scales of wages prevail in mining and engineering industries. This result is achieved by mobility of the workers from industry to industry, from job to job, and by the development of a permanent labour force whose skills and aptitudes are adapted over a long number of years to the conditions of work and employment. In India, wages in the mines have nothing to do with the irksome and difficult conditions of work and are lowest in the scale of industrial wages in the country. In Great Britain, the miners' wages are, on the contrary, some of the highest in the country; the average earning of all adult underground workers, both skilled and unskilled, is £4 18 Sh. a week and, if avoidable absenteeism were reduced, the figure would materially exceed £5 a week.

The average figure in the munitions industries—metal, engineering and shipbuilding—is about £5 11 Sh. but this includes a great deal of overtime.

The disparity between miner's wages and wages in other industries in India is given in the following table :

Average Monthly Wages 1937-38

	Rs.	A.	P.
Miners and loaders in Bihar	...	10	3 2
Weavers in the cotton mills in Bombay	...	49	9 11
Workers in the engineering industries in Bihar	...	42	0 0

It would appear that wages in the mines in India are less than one-fourth of the wages of textile operatives and workers in the engineering industries. In Great Britain the ratio of wages of workers in the metal engineering and ship-building group of industries to wages in the textile industry

is 1.7: 1.; In U S A. it is 2: 1; and in Japan it is 2: 1. In India the average earnings of the workers in the Tata plant at Jamshedpur are Rs. 42/- per mensem as compared with the textile workers' wages of about Rs. 50.

Short-sighted exploitation of the agricultural labour

The causes of such disparity are not far to seek. Everywhere in India industry takes advantage of agricultural unemployment and under-employment and the low rural standard of living. In the Bihar and Bengal coal fields there is a large surplus labour force of small aboriginal tenants and agricultural labourers of the neighbouring rural areas as well as Chota Nagpur. The preponderance of simple-minded and ignorant aboriginals of the rural areas who move to and fro and the isolation of the mines account for both the low scale of wages and the chronic scarcity of labour in the mines during the sowing and the harvesting seasons.

A vicious Circle

Similarly, at Jamshedpur where 40 per cent of the workers may be considered as constituting the permanent labour force of the area, it is the presence of the aboriginal population represented by the *Hos* of Singhbhum, Seraikela, Mayurbhanj and Rajkharsawan, and comprising 10 per cent of all workers, mostly belonging to the unskilled category, which is largely responsible for lowering the average wage. Strange to say that 10 per cent of the workers in the Iron and Steel Plant at Jamshedpur, which has probably reached the highest standard of technical skill and capacity in India, have been estimated as not obtaining a living wage. Industry ruthlessly and short-sightedly exploits the agricultural labour situation in India and thus low wages, excessive absenteeism and turnover, low efficiency and absence of housing and social welfare schemes are all linked together in a vicious circle.

Miners' Wages

The low wages of the miners are a most unsatisfactory feature of the Indian wage situation. In India the proportion which the miners' wage bears to the price of coal at the pit-head is only 12 per cent as compared with 40 to 60 per cent in the major advanced industrial countries. In Great Britain, this proportion is 50, the price of coal per ton being 37 Sh. as compared with the labour cost of 18 Sh. In Japan the proportion works out to 38 per cent, the price of a ton of coal being 7.5 yens, while the labour cost is 2.9 yeps.

**Wages in
Textiles—
Chaotic**

If we examined wages in different centres in the textile industries, which employ about 50 per cent of the total number of workers in the perennial factories of India, we will find that wages are some of the lowest in Madras, Bengal, Bihar, C.P. and in some states of Central India. Here spinners obtain Rs. 10/- to Rs. 15/- and weavers about Rs. 15/- as compared with Rs. 28/- and Rs. 52/- earned respectively by spinners and weavers at Ahmedabad. Wage rates are fixed according to the supply and demand of labour, and organised industry everywhere takes advantage of agricultural unemployment and the unlimited influx of labour to push down the industrial wage to the level of the wage of agricultural workers. When agricultural wages stand at 2 to 3 annas a day, it is no wonder that slightly higher earnings in the factories attract workers in large numbers from the country side. Besides, in the rural areas employment is seasonal. Thus they value the advantage of the comparative stability of industrial employment much higher than its accompanying disadvantages of unremitting toil, unhealthy conditions, bad housing and high rents in the industrial centres. If an unlimited supply of labour has contributed to reduce the wage level in the less industrialized provinces and regions of the country, there has been no attempt on the part of the managements either to train skilled labour or to produce fine varieties of cotton goods that may bear higher earnings for the workers.

**No Standardi-
sation of
Wage Rates
Except at
Ahmedabad**

Not only are wages in the textile industries different in different parts of India but also markedly vary from mill to mill in the same textile centre. A scheme of standardization of jobs and job-rates has been successfully adopted only in Ahmedabad. Elsewhere textile wages are chaotic in the extreme, different mills having different rates for workers engaged in the production of the same type of clothes and even different methods of calculation. Employers rarely take into consideration either the specification of the cloth, the skill required, or the strain involved in the process of weaving. The only consideration which weighs with them is how best to give the lowest possible rates. The situation is still worse in the jute mills where wage rates are much less standardized than even in the cotton mill industry. Not merely low wages but the divergence of rates for similar jobs and categories have been the fertile causes of industrial disaffection and strikes in the textile industry.

Norms of consumption and welfare—Basis for minimum wage

It is essential for the rationalization of the wage system that minimum wages should be laid down and that Wage Boards established to adjust wage scales to movements of the cost of living. The Government of India is contemplating to pass legislation in respect of minimum wages and establishment of Wage Boards. The norms of consumption and welfare requirements worked out for Indian workers by the present writer, which might form the basis of minimum wage standards are :

- (i) 3,000 to 3,500 calories of food per diem
- (ii) 45 yards of clothing per annum
- (iii) One living room, a kitchen and a verandah as accommodation, with 100 sq. foot of living space per capita.

The industrial worker's family should be worked out at 3·4 consumption units. The above norms of nutrition, clothing and housing should be applied in setting up and in computing the costs of standard family budgets of industrial workers in the different provinces. Thus, both the norms and standard budgets of the workers' expenditure at the lowest level of income should be utilised for the calculation of the minimum wage.

Minimum wages -- women and children

At the outset, apart from the minimum for the unskilled group of workers, women's and children's wages have to be fixed, especially in the "sweated" industries. Among these ought to be included rice and wheat milling, shellac and bidi industries, mica cutting and splitting and carpet-weaving. These are some of the industries wherein wages for both women and children are some of the lowest in India. It is also essential to fix minimum wages for woman and child workers in the mines, quarries and plantations. Minimum wage legislation in the world was first adopted as covering women and miners in France and the U. S. A. and in India the need of protecting their subsistence and health by such legislation is even greater due to the chronic housing shortage, low sanitary standards as well as the abnormally high cost of living in industrial centres.

Minimum for coal miner and plantation worker

In the coal fields the minimum statutory wage should be split up into basic tub rate and additional piece-rates. This would secure that living wages are guaranteed to all workers who go underground, and regulate earnings according to the

hazards and difficulties of particular jobs for all categories of piece-workers. Similarly, in the plantations both basic and *ticca* rates should be fixed, the former for the *hazira* to which additional amounts would accrue to the worker for *ticca* or additional tasks, should the worker wish to increase his or her earnings.

At the pre-war level of prices the present writer worked out the minimum wage for an industrial worker (the family comprising in all four persons) at Rs. 30/- per mensem. This might be compared with the Bombay minimum wage figure of Rs. 44/- and the average unskilled worker's wage of about Rs. 12/- in Cawnpore and in Calcutta and the Bihar coal miner's and loader's wage of Rs. 10/- only. During the war the cost of living in most industrial centres increased two to three times. Thus the minimum wage standard has to be raised in similar proportions.

**Wage fixation
and adjust-
ments—
Gradual**

In order to permit a gradual and cautious adjustment of the minimum wage policy to current wage conditions, the present writer has suggested that wages regulations might be graded gently over five to ten years and also linked with the reduction of the hours of work to prevent abrupt economic unsettlement. There should also be flexibility in the application of the minimum wage regulations, which would not establish specific minimum rates, but instead provide the machinery by which these are to be established or varied to meet changes in the cost of living or in economic conditions generally. After the bare living wages are fixed the minimums for skilled workers should be prescribed, based on calculation of margins for skills of various kinds. In Australia, New Zealand and the U. S. A. the system of wage regulation includes the prescription of minimum wages also for skilled categories of workers. In India there is a big gap between wages of unskilled and skilled groups of workers which has to be gradually reduced.

**Raise it above
the fodder
minimum**

But by far the basic and the most insistent problem is to raise wages of the lowest group of workers above the starvation and poverty line and the fodder minimum. There should also be laid down certain general principles according to which wage increments would be related to the rise of a given number of points in the cost of living index or the

Consumers' index. to use a better term that has been adopted in the U. S. A. The percentage wage increase should obviously be the largest for the lowest wage rates. With the bulk of the workers in India below the poverty line, it would be fair to cover the entire rise of the cost of living by wage increments guaranteeing a minimum living wage for the lowest grade of workers under the present price level.

LABOUR INTELLIGENCE AND STATISTICS IN INDIA

N. S. R. SASTRY, M.A., M.Sc., Ph.D., (Lond.)

Dr. N. S. R. Sastry draws pointed attention to the restricted and undependable nature of the statistical information that is available, the defects in the present methods of collection and compilation of statistics and the utter lack of co-ordination among the agencies responsible for labour intelligence.

Dr. Sastry hails the setting up of the Labour Bureau and suggests that the Bureau should take over the tasks of central direction and co-ordination. As authentic and honest statistics are the raw material of social planning—"Lies, white lies and statistics", said Disraeli—Dr. Sastry wants their collection and compilation to be taken away from the untrained and inexpert amateurs and placed in the hands of statistical scientists.



INDIA is very backward in respect of collection and publication of labour intelligence and statistics. Bombay took the earliest steps in publishing important items of labour intelligence in the official Labour Gazette and this lead was followed by the U.P. at a much later date. The Labour Department of the Government of India started a Labour Gazette only in 1943 and no other Province or State has so far got a forum on labour matters. What little information is available is that contained in official administrative reports. From the non-official side also there is lack of systematic information, because the majority of Trade Unions are small and not strongly organised and most of their time is devoted to the adjustment of industrial relations, very little being left for disseminating useful labour information.

The first comprehensive survey on Indian Labour was made by the Royal Commission on Labour appointed in 1931. Regular studies are available only from the publications of the I.L.O., e.g., Industrial Labour in India (1938), Problems of Industry in the East (1938), and articles published in the International Labour Review, etc. The only province which instituted any enquiry into wages and conditions of employment in industrial establishments in India was Bombay, where the Labour Office conducted enquiries in the years 1921, 1923, 1926 and a more comprehensive census covering 1,250 factories in over 25 different industries spread over nearly 100 towns and villages during the thirties. After the popular ministries came to power under the 1935 Act, Committees were appointed in several provinces to study the problem of industrial relations and these afford some information regarding conditions of Labour. But the only source of all-India information available after the Whitley Commission is the report published by the Labour Investigation Committee appointed by the Labour Department of the Government of India in December 1943.

No scientific
co-ordination
yet

The Royal Commission on Labour in India, in the chapter on Labour Statistics and Intelligence, discussed the various topics on which investigations should be carried out. For this purpose they recommended a division of work among the universities, employers and Government. Thanks

to the interest taken by universities in research on economic problems, some studies were made on the lines suggested in the report; but these were not properly co-ordinated. Neither the employers nor the provincial governments took much care in carrying out their part of the work. Due to labour troubles most of the provincial governments had to organise the construction of index numbers of cost of living; and for purposes of weighting the constituent items, investigations into the income and expenditure of working-class families in important industrial areas had to be conducted. But except in a few centres these investigations were not done on scientific lines. However, some useful information is available on this subject. During the recent war the Government of India appointed a special officer to conduct enquiries into the family budgets of labourers in important centres. But the results of these investigations are not yet available to the public.

Labour Statistics in India come mainly as a bye product of the administration of the different legislative enactments pertaining to Labour e.g. the Factories Act, the Payment of Wages Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act, etc. As these different Acts came into force at different times and are usually administered by different authorities, there is very little of co-ordination and comparability of the information collected for the different purposes. Further, information is not available on many desirable aspects, and even in respect of the available information, its accuracy cannot be vouchsafed. The need for collecting detailed statistics regarding various aspects of labour, namely, unemployment, wages and hours of work, and other aspects of industrial life have not been recognised by the provincial governments, with rare exceptions. Only when labour became turbulent after World War I, attempts were made to construct index numbers of cost of living in important industrial cities. But when the question of introducing measures of social security came to the fore, the need for detailed statistics assumed importance. Prof. Adarkar's Report on Health Insurance for Industrial Working Class was the first step taken in India in regard to social security and due to the woeful lack of detailed statistics attempts had to be made to marshall the few available facts to sponsor the scheme. When the Tripartite Labour Conference, convened by the Government of India in

September 1943, considered the subject of Social Security the following resolution was passed: "This Tripartite Labour Conference recommends that, with a view to provide adequate materials on which to plan a policy of social security for labour, the Central Government in co-operation with Governments of Provinces of British India, Indian States and the Chamber of Princes should immediately set up machinery to investigate questions of wages and earnings, employment and housing and social conditions generally, and that as soon as possible after receipt of the required statistics and other data, the Central Government should appoint a mixed Committee to formulate plans of social security." As a consequence, a Labour Investigation Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of D. V. Rege, Esq., I.C.S., early in 1944, and this Committee after detailed investigations into the conditions of Labour in 36 industries issued reports on individual industries and also a general report. Though these reports contain a wealth of statistical data, they are diffused and unco-ordinated.

Industrial Statistics Act

The Industrial Statistics Act of 1942 facilitates collection of information on all aspects of labour; but it has so far not been brought into force for this purpose. Now that a Bureau of Statistics, Intelligence and Investigation has been established in the Labour Department of the Government of India, we expect that full use will be made of the provisions of the Act and all important information will be collected and published by the Bureau. The Labour Bureau of the Government of India, which was established in 1946, should make use of the provisions of the above Act for the maintenance of adequate Labour Statistics in future.

Statistics of factories

The following data are available for each province in their report on the working of the Factories Act 1934: (1) Number of factories in each district; (2) average daily number of workers employed; (3) Details regarding adult males and females, adolescents, boys and girls, (4) Normal working hours per week, intervals, holidays etc; (5) Accidents; (6) Inspection; (7) Causes of accidents and (8) Wage rates. In the beginning, a factory was defined as an undertaking employing at least 100 persons. By various amendments to the Factories Act the scope of the (definition of) factories has been revised so as to include a majority of them, so that at present, an undertaking employing more than 20 persons

comes under the scope of the Act and discretion is given to the Local Governments to extend it to undertakings employing between 10 and 20 persons. Some of the important States have also followed suit in enacting Factories Acts on the same lines as British India and begun to publish figures. But the Labour Department of the Government of India publishes data for British India only and it is desirable that with the co-operation of the States all-India figures should be compiled and published.

Payment of Wages Act

This Act applies to the payment of wages to persons employed in any factory as defined in section 2 (1) of the Factories Act, 1913, and to persons employed, otherwise than in a factory, upon any railway by a railway administration or, either directly or through a sub-contractor, by a person fulfilling a contract with a railway administration. Nothing in this Act applies to wages payable in respect of a wage-period which, over such wage-period, averages to two hundred rupees a month or more. Information regarding average number of persons employed daily, total wages paid, deductions for (1) fines, (2) breaches of contract and (3) damages or losses is available in the returns submitted under this Act. But the aggregate figures are the result of the adding together of the wage-bills of individual factories which worked for different number of days per year. Hence, we cannot draw inferences regarding wage rates in different groups of industries or regions during the same period of time or of the same at different periods of time. Information regarding occupational wage-rates and their year to year changes along with the number of people affected by them regarding allowances and bonuses, money value of other benefits like cheap housing accommodation and food grains etc., is important and should also be obtained.

Workmen's Compensation Act

The Commissioner under this Act records information relating to the nature of the injury (fatal, disablement, permanent total, permanent partial, temporary etc.) and the amount awarded with his remarks. An annual report of the working of the above Act is published by the Government of India from the provincial reports. One thing we have to bear in mind is that the figures do not relate to the year in which the accidents have taken place but to the number of cases disposed of in that year. Owing to illiteracy, ignorance and fear of loss of employment some cases go unreported.

Indian Trade Unions Act

Details regarding the number of members and the statements of income and expenditure, and assets and liabilities of each registered trade union are required to be furnished under the Act. These details are compiled industry-wise and province-wise and published by the Labour Department of the Government of India. The chief point to be noted in this connection is that there are comparatively less number of unions registered and even among the registered a large number fails to submit reports.

Indian Mines Act

The Chief Inspector of Mines receives statistical returns from the managers of mines coming under the Act. Statistics of mines in States and those in British India which are not covered by the above Act are directly received by the Director of Geological Survey of India through the Political Department and the district officers respectively. Information relating to average attendance of the workers, average hours worked per week (classified into underground, open-workings and surface) is obtained through these returns. Other statistical information relating to average daily earnings in the month of December, total number of accidents, incidence of epidemic diseases; and the quantities and the pit-head value of minerals raised, quantity and number of detonators used for explosives, number of safety lamps, mechanical ventilators, coal-cutting machines etc. in the mines, is also available.

Assam Tea Districts Emigrants Labour Act

Statistical data relating to the average number of persons employed per day in the three main plantation industries Tea, Coffee and Rubber is available on an all-India basis in the volumes (1) Indian Tea Statistics, (2) Indian Coffee Statistics and (3) Indian Rubber Statistics. More detailed information for persons employed in tea plantations of Assam is available from returns under the above Act. In the annual report under this Act Statements V to IX are important from the labour view-point. Details regarding number of adults and children working in each district, loss by transfer, discharge or departure etc., total deaths in the year with causes, and average earning of settled and bash-labour and living conditions are obtainable from the above statements.

Industrial Disputes

Statistics of industrial disputes are being collected since 1921 by executive order. After the outbreak of Great War II, the Labour Department of the Government of India first

asked for weekly reports and later quarterly reports also, in prescribed forms. Usually, the information is obtained through the agency or the police in the districts and is transmitted to the Provincial authorities, who, in their turn, pass on the information to the Government of India. In important provincial headquarters like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Cawnpore etc., information regarding disputes is directly obtained by the Inspectors of the Labour Offices, whom the parties approach for mediation. The information obtained relates to (1) the number of disputes, (2) the number of men involved and (3) the number of days lost. The number of disputes is classified according to industries and provinces, the causes of the disputes are classified under (1) pay, 2) bonus, (3) personnel, (4) leave and (5) others; and the results of the disputes are classified as (1) successful, (2) partially successful and (3) unsuccessful; the rest being shown as 'still in progress'. The data collected at present is unsatisfactory in several respects. No distinction is made between strikes and lock-outs. The methods of calculating the number of workers and the number of days lost etc., are not precisely understood in many cases. The information is not quite accurate as it is based on the reports of constables, who, in their turn, depend upon the factory authorities. Somewhat more reliable information is available where Labour Officers have been appointed.

**Scope of
Labour
Intelligence
needs
enlargement**

To give a more complete picture about the conditions of employment there is a great need to extend the scope of labour statistics to bring in information relating to (a) migration, labour turnover and absenteeism and (b) hours of work and earnings with respect to at least labour employed in factories.

Migration

In former years, labour from rural areas, where the pressure of population was great, used to migrate to industrial cities when agricultural conditions were bad, and a large percentage of them was going back to the villages after accumulating some money. In recent years "Chawls" and "Bustees" have been growing up in industrial cities and the present generation of workers is more urban-minded. Reliable data about the extent of these changes is not available although such data is useful in discussing the problems of labour turnover, absenteeism, housing accommodation, efficiency of work, etc.

Labour turnover

To estimate the extent of labour turnover, we require correct information regarding the employment and retirement of employees and workers in each factory.

There are bound to be seasonal fluctuations in this turnover, and hence we require figures on a monthly basis, though for convenience these figures may be compiled quarterly or even annually.

Absenteeism

Figures of absenteeism are being collected and published for some time in their respective Labour Gazette and Labour Bulletin in Bombay and more recently in the U. P. also. They do not cover all industries, neither all centres of the industries selected. In 1945, the Government of India made arrangement for collecting this data from such factories as were prepared to supply the information voluntarily. but so far no report has been published on this matter. Any enquiry into this problem requires the maintenance of regular service cards for the workers in the concerned factories.

Wages and earnings

Average earnings per worker in an industry or region are affected not only by the rates of wages, hours of work and by the state of employment, but also by changes in the proportion of male and female, adults and children, and of skilled and unskilled labourers. Further, if part or the whole of the wage is paid in kind, and if in some cases commodities are supplied at cheap rates and if free or cheap housing accommodation is provided, difficulties arise in comparing wages in such industries or regions with those in others where those conditions do not prevail. These several limitations are to be borne in mind in collecting wage statistics and in constructing index numbers of wages.

Index numbers

For the construction of index numbers of wages a detailed schedule of important occupations in each industry should be drawn up in the first instance. The customary wages paid in each industry, in each region of a district, should be examined at regular intervals, say, a year, and a record of changes in those rates and the number of workers affected by them during the intervals should be kept. The preliminary requisite for this purpose is a wage census which should be repeated at intervals of 5 to 10 years. The information of wage rates taken during the census should be given by industry, region, occupation, and sex for both adults and children. For unorganised industries and occupations in

which piece-rates prevail it would be preferable to collect statistics of earnings rather than rates of wages, to show wage conditions. This datum of earnings can be obtained only from employers' pay books, and this information has to be supplemented with the datum of hours of work.

Unemployment

It is not possible to obtain reasonably adequate statistics of unemployment unless there is an unemployment insurance scheme or other means of registration, complete, for places or occupations such as is sometimes provided by trade unions. We have neither an unemployment insurance scheme nor strong and popular trade unions which can take up this work. Hence the state of unemployment has to be investigated periodically, by the method of sampling, from important industrial centres. This is the best time to start such work because, due to war, there are conditions of near-full employment and if a complete enumeration of the number of workers employed is made in respect of the industries coming under the Factories Act, 1934, the Mines Act, 1932, and also other important organised and unorganised industries, the figures of employment in the subsequent years will provide an index of unemployment as these two are inversely related. The figures should preferably be monthly so as to provide indices of seasonal changes in employment. As has already been pointed out, these have to be supplemented by periodical investigations.

Statistics for other classes of Labour

So far no statistics are collected for three important classes of labour, each of which forms a huge group of labour population, namely (1) labour employed on construction, maintenance and repair work of all kinds e. g., buildings, roads, canals, aerodromes, etc., (2) labour employed in transport services, excluding railways, e. g., water transport (chiefly inland navigation), docks, tramways and motor transport and (3) labour employed in commercial services, e. g., shops, restaurants, entertainment houses, banks etc. It would be useful to make statutory provision for the collection of statistics relating to labour employed in these services also.

Agency of the statistics collection

Returns under the Factories Act and the Payment of Wages Act are received by the Provincial Chief Inspectors of Factories; returns under the Trade Unions Act are received by the Provincial Commissioners of Labour and returns

under the Workmen's Compensation Act by the authority appointed under the Act in each province. As regards statistics relating to Mines, the Chief Inspector of Mines receives all returns from Mines, in British India which come under the Indian Mines Act, and the Director of Geological Survey receives returns from non-Act mines in British India from the concerned provincial authorities, and from the Indian States through the Political Department. Returns under the Assam Tea District Emigrant Labour Act are received by the district officers and communicated to the Controller of Emigrant Labour. Returns collected by the provincial authorities are compiled in their offices, and from the different provincial statements, consolidated figures for British India, are compiled at the Centre. Statistics received by Chief Inspector of Mines, Director of Geological Survey of India, Controller of Emigrant Labour, are compiled in their respective offices; and those received directly in the Department of Labour of the Government of India in the statistical branch of that department.

the way out

The available statistical information is characterised by (1) its lack of reliability and (2) the time lag between the period to which it refers and the time of publication. As regards the first point, to ensure the correctness of the statistics collected, at least a sample of the returns should be checked at the source. It is reported that the present field staff of the respective offices is not sufficient for this purpose. None of the present offices has any special staff even at headquarters, and the work is mostly done by routine clerks. A trained person can bring about improvements in the checking and tabulation methods; and will also be useful in the analysis and interpretation of the data. Hence, it is desirable that the collection and the compilation of the data should be entrusted to a statistical division with a trained officer of at least a junior rank as its head. Time lag, in a big country like India, is unavoidable but could progressively be reduced with a growing realisation of the utility of statistical information and improvement in the methods of collection. As the staff of the respective departments is more concerned with the enforcement of the provisions of the respective Acts, statistics take a secondary place in their work. On these grounds also, the creation of a separate statistical section in each of the offices mentioned above under a trained

person, and some field staff for checking the matter on the spot appear to be essential. Of course, some uniform procedure has to be adopted by all Provincial Governments; and the Central Departments also should be organised on a suitable basis. The Employment Exchanges can play an important part by co-operating in the collection of statistics. It might be useful to have some qualified investigators in these exchanges to attend to special investigations on labour problems as and when they arise. Decisions of policy relating to (a) the nature of statistics to be collected and (b) the manner of collection should be taken at the Headquarters at Delhi and the execution of policy and collection of statistics should be in the hands of the executive officers of the Central Government at various centres including those in the exchanges and of the provincial executive officers. To ensure a common and continuous policy there should be a statistical branch at the centre, sufficiently strong and well-directed, and the executive officers in the field should have sufficient staff to enable them to carry out the requirements. The newly created Labour Bureau of the Government of India should be entrusted with this task.

SECTION V
THE I. L. O. & INDIA

Contributors

Dr. Lanka Sundaram

T. S. Ramanujam

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INDIA AND INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

LANKA SUNDARAM, M.A., Ph. D.

Dr. Lanka Sundaram goes over the history of three decades of India's essay in self-assertion on the international plane, handicapped though she was by having to function as a tolerated appendage to Britain. She did fight her way through, undaunted and with a goodly measure of success in making her voice heard. Her participation in the conferences of the I.L.O. not only gave her an opportunity to emerge as the redoubtable champion of Asia and Asian causes but resulted in giving a fillip to social legislation in the country. The Indian worker has still to complete his odyssey but the world's eyes are now on him and India and a new world

light, however dim, is showing up the dark corners in our socio-economic set-up.

India will, from now on, speak with the new dignity and the new strength born of freedom. Her work at the I.L.O. is more or less cut out for her—to make it really meaningful and make it stronger by asserting the right to social justice of all the 'coloured' and the under-privileged peoples of the world. The vision of man is broader now, and more courageous and the I.L.O.'s future depends upon what it can do with this new vision, this heartening concept of international social justice.

Dr. Lanka Sundaram does not despair of the future of the Indian worker - (and through him India) he is confident that he will come into his own, develop his own leadership and overcome all hurdles at present projected by fissiparous tendencies, provincial and sectarian antagonisms and the like.

SIXTEEN YEARS ago I had the privilege of being called a heretic, for having demanded from Geneva an Asian Labour Conference, in addition to regional set-ups for the various activities of the now defunct League of Nations and its ancillary bodies, with India as their fulcrum. Today, I rejoice at the fact that such a regional Conference is being held, and that India is playing the host to all the Asian Countries in October this year.

**India had to
fight her way
through**

Nearly thirty years ago, at the Washington Labour Conference, in 1919, a major fight took place, resulting in the walk-out of India from that Conference, and the passing of a vote of censure upon the organisers of the International Labour Organization for adhering to an irregular constitution of the Governing Body, from which India was excluded. At this distance of time, it looks rather surprising how a non-Indian like Sir Louis Kershaw, who represented this country, staged this walk-out and got the censure motion through.

Few people in this country realise that India was mentioned in the *annexe* of the Covenant of the League of Nations, more as a matter of courtesy to Britain, than as a right of admission to her for participation in the international organization which came into existence after the Treaty of Versailles. This, however, was not so in the case of India's admission into and participation in the I.L.O. There was a battle of brains, as well as of facts, which went on for the better part of three years (1919-22), in which Lord Balfour, Lord Hardinge and Sir William Meyer took part, at the highest level, before India was admitted, in her own right, as belonging to the list of the first eight chief states of industrial importance in the world, without which she could not have taken her place on the governing body of the I.L.O.

**And now
Indians speak
for India**

India's participation in the I.L.O. as resurrected and revived on the basis of the Philadelphia Charter of 1944, does not look so heroic as her original entry into the Geneva-cum-Montreal set-up. Inch by inch, India had to fight for her rights inside the I.L.O. and I was present in the Batiment Electoral of Geneva when, in 1931, Seth Walchand Hirachand walked out as a protest against the non-recognition of the

principle that non-nationals should not be permitted as representatives of India in her delegations to the I. L. O. Prior to 1931, Indian delegations to the League of Nations used to be led by Britishers, while almost every delegation from this country to International Conferences, both of the League and the I.L.O., included quite a good number of non-Indians. Even as late as 1944, Mr. H. C. Prior of the Government of India was a member of the Indian delegation to the Philadelphia Conference. Today, however, the position is radically different, and, as a member of the Indian delegation to the first General Assembly and the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, I can say with a considerable amount of first-hand knowledge that India has come into her own, and that her delegations to international conferences are purely national in character, speaking in the name of the people of the country

Within the first decade and a half of the existence of the I.L.O. and as a result of the series of clashes between Indian delegations on the one part and the I.L.O. on the other, representatives of government, employers and workers found representation on the Governing Body of the I.L.O. with the result that India's participation in the I.L.O. must now be said to have been put on a secure footing, with honour and rights accruing to her.

During the greater part of the Inter-war period, India's membership of the I.L.O. was conducted on a basis which looks rather ridiculous from present standards. Even though the Director-General of the I. L. O. had the right of access to the Government of India in respect of communications to Member States, the replies of the Government of India used to be sent to him through the India Office, the reason being that the Government of India was not recognised as completely sovereign. In comparison with the procedure adopted with reference to the League of Nations, viz., that the right of communication between the Secretary-General and New Delhi did not exist at all and that correspondence between them was always through London where the Great Moghul vetted the views of the Government of India, this partial access of India to the I.L.O., must be considered to be reasonably satisfactory. Today, the position is altogether different, at any rate since August, 1946 when the Provisional Government

of India assumed functional sovereignty in regard to the formulation of policies and the nomination of members of delegations to the I.L.O. and the United Nations.

While India's participation in the United Nations' Organization today must be said to have started on a representative basis only in 1946, with reference to the I.L.O., India had the experience of almost three decades, in which the view-points of the people found expression to an extent which must be considered to be amazing. This was possible because of the tripartite character of Indian delegations to the I.L.O. There were, no doubt, limits to this perfunctory representation of Indian national opinion in the councils of the I. L. O., both in respect of the Governing Body, and the Conference. Even at the Philadelphia Conference it was Mr. M. N. Roy's Indian Federation of Labour which was given the opportunity of nominating representatives for the labour section of the Indian delegation. From this year onwards, Indian delegations to the I.L.O. will be completely national in character in respect of the three units thereof, and the battles, which were carried out during the past five years inside our national tripartite labour organization, will be fought at the highest international level, with the Government of India ceasing to be a neutral buffer between employers and labour, and siding more and more with the view-point of the working man in the land, for such a course is not only obligatory but eminently necessary in view of the prevailing new ideas of social security.

**India's Voice
has not been
a Voice in the
Wilderness**

From a purely historical point of view, even the perfunctory participation of Indian delegations in the I.L.O. had made it possible for spokesmen of employers and workers from this country to register protests, times out of number, against the *regime* of the I.L.O. There is, for example, the classical illustration of the 48 hours convention for Western countries passed at Washington in 1919, which was rendered non-applicable to Asian countries which had a higher permissible limit. Year after year, labour delegates from India, including the late Lala Lajpat Rai, sought to assail this distinction between Western and Asian Labour, which was instituted in order that White Capitalism might ride strident across the seven seas, in as much as dependencies and colonies of the Imperial Powers could be exploited on the basis of cheap labour. From sixty as a permissible limit, the

hours of work in Asian countries were ultimately brought down to fifty-four, and I believe that this happy consummation was one of the direct results of a consistent fight put up by India, and the leadership which she was able to give to every Asian country within the frame-work of the I.L.O.

Additional to classical instances like these, there were numerous other occasions when even the Government of India of the inter-war period, which, though according to Edwin Montagu, was not only wooden, iron and antediluvian but also a subordinate department of the British Government, sought to assert its independence even in direct conflict with Britain and other Imperial Powers. I have worked out minutely the number of divisions in the International Labour Conference, when India, meaning thereby the Government of India, voted against Britain and other Western Powers. This assertion of the right of India for independent action cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be called national or sovereign with respect to the developments in the inter-war period. But it is clear that, while in the case of the League of Nations Indian Delegations toed the line of Britain and followed the principles which were unmistakably traceable to the British Foreign Office, in regard to the I.L.O. the impression was left upon assembled world delegations that India had problems of her own, and that even the British Government in India was not unwilling to tackle these problems in a manner which conduced to the well-being of the people.

The late C. F. Andrews, whose authority to pronounce upon labour and industrial questions in this country cannot be disputed, observed in 1928 that what would have been considered impossible before 1919, and what would certainly have taken fifty years to achieve was made possible by India's membership of the I.L.O. within the span of a decade, and that one by one the windows of this country were opened to the light sought to be let into every corner of the world by the I.L.O. within the meaning of Part XIII of the Peace Treaty.

**A Freed
World will
make I.L.O.
Meaningful**

Article I of the Philadelphia Charter declaring that labour is not a commodity, freedom of expression and association are essential to sustained progress; poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere; and the war

against want requires to be carried out with unrelenting vigour and by continuous and concerted international effort, has not come into existence over-night. There is behind it the continuous, though not glamourised, effort of the I.L.O. of a quarter of a century. Even at Philadelphia, the Indian employers' delegate could not find support for the principle of "freedom from exploitation", as one of the essential ingredients of the social and international ambitions of the I.L.O. This failure on the part of India to secure recognition for one of the most urgent principles of international action only shows how imperfect the I.L.O. or for that matter, any other international organization of to-day is for, with 60% of the people the world over (some 1,300,000,000) kept as under privileged and un-privileged, and with colonialism, in addition to economic diplomacy and domination, continuing unbridled, there cannot be any social justice as between the Whites and the non-Whites.

Five hundred millions of China, four hundred millions of India, a hundred million Javanese, sixty million people inhabiting Burma, Malaya, Ceylon, Indo-China and the Phillipines, the millions of people under peonage in South America, fifteen million Negroes in the U.S.A., in addition to a hundred and fifty million people of the African continent are even today subject to exploitation of varying degrees of intensity. One by one, these peoples are rising to the limits of their political freedom, and, more than that, each of them is beginning to assert its right to economic freedom which, in other words, means the right to survival.

**Equal Pay for
Equal Work—
the Founda-
tion of World
Social Justice**

These freedoms cannot be achieved either by mere participation in the United Nations Organization, or the International Labour Organization. They can only be achieved through the development of sanctions behind the people, who must, as they are today attempting to, surge forward to obtain their freedom. There is a new type of Imperialism which is striding across the world, encased only in new clothes, and, if I do not misread the situation, the rather protracted International Conference on Trade and Employment, which is sitting in Geneva as I write these lines, might as well break up on the theory of comparative efficiencies of production adumbrated in the *démarche* of the U.S.A. of autumn of 1944, which has supplied the basis for these confabulations. From the first Maritime Conference of Genova in 1921 to the Maritime

Conference at Seattle in 1946, the International Labour Organization was not able to solve the question of equal wages for equal work rendered by Indian and European sailors. The typical nature of this question alone convinces me that unless and until workers, that is to say in both the hemispheres of White and non-White, receive equal wages for equal work, there cannot be any social justice as between the privileged and the non-privileged peoples of the earth today or tomorrow.

**The I.L.O. is
as good as its
Member
States**

I consider that the failure of the International Labour Organization during the past three decades to tackle this problem of equal wages for equal work, as between the White and the non-White, is responsible for the admitted lack of enthusiasm in Oriental Countries of the justice and competence of the I.L.O. to deal with the human problem of the world, which far transcends the economic, the political and the military problems. It will be ungenerous on my part to decry the I.L.O. for its patent failure in this sector of international work, for the I.L.O. can only accomplish things to the extent to which the Member States participating in it permit her. The Conventions of the I.L.O. have no mandatory character. They may be accepted by member States, as recommendations only. Apart from the periodical prodding which the Director of the I.L.O. gives to Member States regarding action taken or not taken on the Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Labour Conferences, there is no known method of compulsion of Member States towards accepting these obligations, and, more so, towards translating these obligations into concrete action. Speaking in the Council of State, the late Sir Mohamed Shafi indicated the viewpoint of the Government of India on May 27, 1924, as follows: "An International Agreement cannot, in the nature of things, be ratified, save by, or on behalf of governments of the countries which are parties to an Agreement, and it is in this capacity, and *not as statutory law*, that the Governor-General-in-Council ratifies or declines to ratify International Agreements to which India is a party" (*Italics mine*).

**Tripartite
Character of
I.L.O.—a
Handicap**

I believe that there cannot be any scope for a greater degree of formalization or compulsion than in the inter-war period, to the conventions, recommendations and resolutions of the International Labour Conference even under the added stimulus of the Philadelphia Charter. I also believe that

even the San Francisco Charter of the United Nations does not contain within its ambit the germs of a super world state, with provision for sanctions to meet violation of these obligations by Member States of the United Nations. An illustration of the futility of international action in the political sphere, un-accompanied by enforceable sanctions, is supplied by the decision of the Union of South Africa to incorporate South-West Africa within its territories, in direct contravention of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization of 1946. Even in the limited sphere of international labour activity, lack of sanctions has prevented, and will continue to prevent, mandatory action being taken by the Member States of the I.L.O., and for this, I must state, the tripartite character of the Organization is directly responsible, leave alone the secondary responsibility of States, Members who consider national sovereignty more or less dear to their hearts, than allegiance to any international organization.

Dice Loaded in Favour of the Employer

An analysis of the structure of governments the world over today does not convince me that the plenipotentiaries of people are enthroned in power. Barring, perhaps, the U.S.S.R., the vast majority of the governments are pronouncedly capitalistic, and I include within the application of this statement the so-called Socialist Government of Britain through which the British Socialist Party runs an Empire! In the case of India, even the socialism of the highest Congressman has clay feet. By and large, the governments are either unashamedly capitalistic, or dominated by the capitalist class. As long as this structure of government continues, it is clear that the dice will always be loaded in favour of the employer.

Denial of the Right to Strike

In case I am misunderstood, let me consider the point by making a reference to the abolition of the right to strike, which popular governments in the Provinces and at the Centre today have contrived to enforce in India only the other day. The working man has still to complete his Odessey to attain minimum margins of subsistence, and the right to the fundamental dignity and worth of the human personality, and the right to unfettered participation in the government of his country, as in the councils of the world. Taking India as an example of Asian and African countries, it is clear that it is the leadership of the *petite bourgeoisie*

International Labour Conference in 1946, Mr. S. Lall, speaking on behalf of the Government of India, declared: "The principles of the International Labour Organization have an appeal to my countrymen. Our collaboration has been spiritual, no less than material. We have throughout tried to raise our low standards. Our progress should not be judged by ratifications alone, though in this respect also we hold the brightest place in Asia, and our record is probably not below the world average". As against this self-laudatory exposition of the achievement of India, I must quote here what Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, speaking on behalf of Indian labour, told the Philadelphia Session of the International Labour Conference in 1944: "In a recent publication by the Government of India it is admitted that only 5% of the people of India have good protective water, even to drink; 95% of the people of my country drink foul, contaminated water, 200 out of every 1,000 infants born die in the first year of existence, as against 40 in Australia and New Zealand. The expectation of life in my country is 26 years, as against 70 in New Zealand. The birth-rate is nearly 30 against 9 in Australia. These are the social conditions of my country, despite twentyfive years of association of the Government of India with this Organization We have no minimum wages, no social insurance either unemployment or sickness, or any other. We have not known limitations of hours of work, except in some factories and in the railways for the last few years".

**You cannot
blame the
I.L.O.**

It will be unfair on my part to visit the I.L.O. with responsibility for the incubus of age-long conditions of disgrace in my country, or for the matter with responsibility for inaction, or indifferent action, on the part of the Government of India in respect of international labour Conventions and Recommendations. Until 1935, industrial and social legislation in India was in accordance with the Government of India Act of 1919, which administered this country as a subordinate branch of the British Government. Till 1935, the Government of India was administered most unashamedly for securing the well-being of her British masters. The Constitution Act of 1935, though not formally promulgated with reference to the Centre even today, split up jurisdiction in labour matters as between the Centre and the Provinces, and while the Central Legislature, under the provisions of this Act,

assumed concurrent jurisdiction, the Provincial Legislatures were also permitted to pass legislation in the sphere of industry and labour. The result was that concurrent jurisdiction in labour matters overlapped, to an extent which is not only irritating, but which leads to confusion and contradiction both in the central and provincial spheres.

The Centre had, till recently, to take recourse to suasion, in order to bring the Provinces into line with its proposals in respect of industrial and labour legislation. Without uniformity, national legislation becomes futile, and without uniformity, at least comparability, as between the legislation of one Province and the other, there will be black patches left on the social map of India. Sometimes it is Bombay which is in the van, sometimes Madras and sometimes C.P., whether it be legislation relating to industrial disputes, factory inspection, or money-lending. It is inevitable that in a federal constitution, with residuary powers vesting with the Provinces, this confusion is bound to exist and, if I do not mis-interpret current history, residuary powers vesting with the individual States constituted a stumbling-block to the participation of U.S.A. in the I.L.O. of the inter-war period.

The future constitution of the Indian Union must necessarily be federal in character, and even though the Indian Union is to participate in the I.L.O., it is clear that the same process of strife, through negotiation with the Provinces, is bound to go on, in regard to the translation of international labour Conventions into national legislation, within the meaning of the concurrent lists of Schedule VII of the Constitution Act of 1935, which, I am afraid, is bound to continue in principle, if not in the letter, in the future constitutional set-up of this country.

I must here say a word with reference to 582 Indian States which, between themselves, claim a hundred million people. In 1927, the late Lord Birkenhead, as Secretary of State for India, notified the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, that, within the meaning of Articles 405 and 408 of the League Covenant, it would not be possible automatically to secure observance within the territories of the States international labour Conventions and Recommendations which were agreed to by India. Non-ratification by any

single legislature, even if such legislatures exist in all these States, would have meant default of adhesion by India to these international labour Conventions and Recommendations. Assurance was, however, given by the Secretary of State that, whenever India ratifies, with respect to the Provinces, an international labour Convention or Recommendation, it will be brought to the notice of the *durbars* of the States, and I have known cases when the Political Department of the Government of India did actually bring these obligations to the notice of the Princes.

Still it is clear today that the Indian States are definitely outside the purview of the I.L.O., and that, while industrial and social legislation, fitful as it is, is marching ahead in Indian Provinces, the States are completely exempt from its operation. Though few States, like Mysore, Baroda, Travancore etc. have Factories Acts and legislation relating to other industrial and social matters on their individual statute books, there is no comparison at all between the quantum of protection available to the worker in the Indian States, as compared to that available to his compeer in the Indian Provinces. Repeatedly, the cry has gone up in this country that, as a result of less onerous industrial and labour legislation in Indian States (which naturally enters into cost of production), industry has migrated from the Provinces to the States. During the recent World War, when the Provinces reached the peak of taxation, there was almost a mad rush of industry from the Provinces to the States, and the Government of India was obliged to promulgate an Ordinance prohibiting the dismantling and removal of factories from Provinces to States.

**Indian States
must be
lugged in**

It is clear that this immunity the Indian States enjoy at present cannot be continued to exist in the future, with respect to their participation in the Indian Union, in relation to any *regime* of the I.L.O. With the formation of two sovereign Dominions the States must come into either for the sake of preserving their economic integrity and thus automatically come into the pool of international activity, because, unlike during the past thirty years, representatives of Indian States will have places in the Legislatures and executives of the Indian Union and Pakistan. In other words, such of the Indian Princes who participate in these

two future sovereign States, will automatically be bound by the national legislation arising out of acceptances of international labour Conventions and Recommendations.

If I do not misinterpret the position, such adhesion would have retrospective effect, for there cannot be *begar* in any Indian State the moment such a State functions within the framework of the Indian Union or Pakistan, because the Indian Union and Pakistan will be bound by the existing labour conventions in respect of their territories. Such of the States which elect to stay out of the Indian Union or Pakistan will naturally be outside the pale of the I.L.O. and will have to be treated as such. I have abounding faith in the future of this country, in so far as that the inexorable process of events would compel each individual State which elects to come into, or contract out of, the Indian Union or Pakistan, ultimately to conform to an integral system of economy and polity. There is no question that the Indian States will be allowed to dot the map of India as so many diseased limbs of the body politic, in which oppression and denial of privilege can run riot.

**I see a
Socialist order
of things**

Both in retrospect and prospect, I am convinced that India's participation in the I.L.O. has been of benefit to her people. It is quite true that the pace of industrial and social progress in India has not been commensurate with the ideals entombed in Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles, or in Article 1 of the Philadelphia Charter. A people's government is emerging on the horizon, and very soon a Socialistic Republic, enveloping both the Provinces and the States (with the temporary and incongruous feature of monarchical form of government inside the States, making the cynics burst their sides with laughter), will come into existence in this country, in which the rights of the working man will be put on the highest pedestal. The days of the *petite bourgeoisie* leadership in this land are numbered. The working man's movement is starting, therefore, from the bottom. The Gandhian ethic of the capitalist being the trustee of the working man will die a death of inanition, much sooner than most people expect. The clay feet of socialism in India will drop, and the colossus of the working man, with the dignity and worth of his personality fully vindicated, will rise, and sweep before him the centuries old obstacles involved in the caste system

and the occupational division of labour ; privilege, denoted by the unearned increment of the landlord, and the *entrepreneur*, and oppression, both of the foreign master, who is quitting, and of the present leadership, which is exploiting him in the name of the freedom and liberty of the country.

U.N.O. MUST IMPLEMENT

I. L. O.'S MOTTO

T. S. RAMANUJAM, M.A., L.L.B. (London)

Trade Unionist, Madras

The world has essayed twice on papers, to establish peace on the basis of Social Justice, the Charter that brought the I. L. O. into being and the recent Philadelphia Charter; but the High Contracting Parties are merely toying with words and lying "like truth". The hopes of mankind that rose sky-scraper high that the United Nations, who waged a total war against Fascism, would preserve their war-time enthusiasm and amity and embark on a co-operative adventure to build up a total peace on the basis of social justice appear to be destined to suffer ignominious ship-wreck. If the I.L.O.'s motto, "HUSBAND JUSTICE AND YE SHALL GARNER PEACE" were

suffered to remain a dead letter and the U.N.O. does not implement it without delay, Shri Ramanujam avers that in case of World War III being precipitated, Labour, which can no longer be bamboozled by fine phrases- would stage an all-out stay-in strike. Labour is the greatest friend of peace ; here, at home, in India and elsewhere no concrete evidence of an endeavour to reorient society on fundamental basis of Social Justice is discernible and if that is not done or ignored or postponed, Labour would not just take things lying down. Labour is not unaware of its limitations as regards educational equipment and organisational discipline. Labour is prepared to go into partnership with the powers that be provided that partnership is based on a Universal Plan of Social Action. The task of all men of good-will in the world is clear, the achievement of International Social Democracy.

**The Chattel
Theory of
Labour is not
Dead yet**

LABOUR has much ground to cover. For more than a century the chattel theory of labour has been seriously and systematically challenged in every nook and corner of the civilized globe; it is not dead yet; at best we can only say that it is dying, although it takes an unconscionably long time in doing so. Such an inordinate delay on the part of "vested interests" even to recognize the human dignity of labour has already driven many a redoubtable champion of social peace to the verge of despair. The inspiring motto of the International Labour Organization, "Husband Justice and Ye Shall Garner Peace", has shared for the past quarter of a century and more the same fate as that of the word of God alluded to in Christ's Parable of the Sower. Here is a pathetic example of a good seed failing to fall upon good ground. Therefore it has not sprung up and borne fruit an hundred fold. Either it has fallen by the wayside, trodden upon and devoured by the fowls of the air; or it has fallen upon a rock and has withered away soon after sprouting for want of moisture; or it has fallen among thorns and been choked up by the very thorns that have sprung up with it.

**Labour
Knows its
Mind Now**

Two grandiloquent attempts have been made by the comity of nations to establish social peace on the foundation of social justice the world over—one through the Charter that brought the International Labour Organization into existence, and the other through the Philadelphia Labour Charter. But the High Contracting Parties to these Charters are still seen to play a role that is best described in Macaulay's words as one of "large promises, sweet excuses and elaborate tissues of falsehood." Equally tired out and disappointed by World War No. II as by World War No. I, Labour cannot help exclaiming in a pessimistic mood of despair, "Words, Words, meaning nothing!" And if nothing is done and done with meteoric speed by the United Nations Organization to redeem the solemn promises of Member States and to implement a universal plan for peace that is good enough to convert this dog-kennel of a world into an ante-chamber to Heaven, the future of evolutionary socialistic democracy—the dream of the International Labour Organization—is well-nigh doomed to total failure. The voice of labour can no longer be regarded even by the

traditionally snug and complacent sections of society as either feeble or equivocal. Labour wants to establish, in the shortest possible period, a Socialistic Democracy in each and every territorial unit of the world for it has come to realize already that its backwardness in any one part of the world affects its progress in all the other parts of the world —by evolution if possible, by revolution if necessary. And if in the backward Asian countries, where the masses are exploited by bureaucracies and autocracies that are as many-coloured as the rainbow in the sky much meaningless bloodshed is to be avoided in the name of social peace and justice, every progressive man and woman in Great Britain, the United States of America and all other advanced countries, which are never tired of boasting not only of their efficiency and prosperity but also of their democracy, should deem it his or her duty to join whole-heartedly any crusade —even to inaugurate it, if necessary —against every subtle shade of anti-democratic forces in Asia as much as in any other continent of the world. In particular, the future of social justice and evolutionary democracy depends in no small measure on the careful vigilance and intelligent control exercised by the ‘commoners of the world’ over the current British Programme of “Quit India” which is at best a dual personality, now appearing as the good Dr. Jekyll and professing to emancipate voluntarily in a fit of renunciation (too good even for an Eastern Sage of the Vedic Period) forty million slaves, now appearing as the horrible Mr. Hyde and chuckling, in a fit of devilish delight, over its own inherent susceptibilities to consort with the forces of Hell that seek to mutilate and vivisection India, the fairest and purest Madonna of history, into as many narrow domestic fragments as it is possible for the avaricious hand of crime to achieve.

**Labour is
Determined to
Resist World
War III**

Labour wants that it should no longer be used as a pawn on the chess-board of international strategy and diplomacy. The United States of America, under President Truman, is acclaimed to be the foremost fountain-head of democracy in modern times; Great Britain under Premier Attlee does not lag behind in clamorous competition to play the same role. On the 12th March 1947, President Truman decided what the political destiny of America as the fountain-head of democracy demanded, and confidently embarked upon the

Marshall Plan for the rehabilitation of Europe. His policy and programme were —we are told— not a hastily conceived leap in the dark. They are said to be erected on what may be called the Truman Doctrine. The President himself has revealed it to his friends on several occasions somewhat as follows:—"I don't care what kind of government nations achieve. They can all go Communist, if they wish, provided that they do so with due regard to law and in free and unfettered elections. But we can't stand for police states imposed on people by armed minorities." The Labour Cabinet in England has proclaimed its faith in the Truman Doctrine, but has tragically failed to implement it in regard to India. How also can one explain the alarming hurry with which all parties in England are determined to drop down the "White Man's Burden" which they have carried so long as "a sacred trust for civilization"? The rulers of Indian States are free to regard themselves as independent potentates and to weaken democratic India to such an extent their autocracy can easily be prolonged if not perpetuated; and such a situation is disastrous to labour far more than to any other interest, for the ameliorative and protective conventions forged by the International Labour Office are bound to be set at naught by undemocratic rulers tracing their ancestry from celestial objects like the Sun and the Moon and taking their stand on the outmoded pedestal of "Divine Right of Kings." The Truman Doctrine, read in the light of Britain's India Policy, has already roused the suspicions of labour; and if it turns out to be a purely strategic weapon of offence against Russia with whom the U. S. A., and Great Britain have an undoubted ideological conflict, and not a humanitarian device based upon social justice and calculated to secure universal peace, World War III is a foregone conclusion. But labour is determined to stage a "stay-in strike" in the event of such a war breaking out; it is determined to prevent all future catastrophies that are likely to throw the entire globe into a welter of bloodshed and darkness; and it therefore wants to plan out universal peace as efficiently as the politicians are eager to plan out universal war; and if the existing forms of government in any part of the world are such as to thwart so just and beneficent a programme, the effective sanction against such a meaningless obstruction will be mass action—probably after a declaration of a general political strike through a World Federation of

Trade Unions and Workers' Organizations It is needless to add that a few trials of strength on these lines are bound to ensure the logical conclusion of All-just and All-powerful Socialistic Democratic Government for the entire human family. That is what Labour really wants to achieve either immediately or ultimately.

Labour is not Unaware of its Limitations

But labour is, at the same time, fully alive to its present limitations as regards education and organizational discipline, and is prepared to own the need for a certain transition period for equipment and preparation for its final struggle with "vested interests" in all their forms. The only question now left open for discussion by passionate lovers of peace is "What shall be the Interim Arrangement that is best calculated to prevent war and to promote peace?"

Labour is prepared to go into Partnership but asks for a Universal Plan of Social Action

It must be admitted that the Lord has intended each man to live by the fruits of his own toil and not by the stolen fruits of another's toil. For some time to come, labour is prepared to go into partnership with capital, provided the latter is wise and willing enough to concede in theory as well as in practice that the former is the dominant partner. With this end in view labour insists upon the immediate inauguration of a universal plan of action, preferably by the United Nations Organization, capable of translating in practice the principles of justice and humanity and peace enumerated in the Preamble to Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles as well as those in the Philadelphia Charter; and it expects and demands that the United Nations Organization should place on the forefront of its programme of work for the coming year the removal of all those conditions of labour in Asian countries and in certain backward areas of Africa, that offer an irresistible temptation for exploitation of man by man, that are, in consequence, a real and immediate source of danger to the peace and harmony of the world, that are a continuing obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions of labour in their own countries, and that involve an intolerable measure of injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people.

The Scene at home in India

Considerations of space prevent us from giving an innumerable number of concrete instances to show how pathetically neglected is the lot of labour to-day in India, despite the fact that the Government of the land is an

original member of the International Labour Organization and has been quite regular in paying up its annual subscription to that body and ratifying its Conventions. Even the nine points of the Preamble to the I. L. O. Charter are either not implemented at all or only partially given effect to. For instance, Freedom of Association is sought to be denied recently by a provincial government in India to its employees; the Madras Government Fire Service Workers' Union, duly registered under the Indian Trade Unions Act 1926, is forced to convert itself into a Government Service Association, without the usual trade union rights. The abolition of child labour and the imposition of certain conditions on the labour of young men in factories have been brought about by provincial laws; but neither the state nor the society has made any decent or adequate provision either for the education of these people or for their proper physical development. Such advanced theories as Social Security and Full Employment are conspicuous by their total absence or feeble presence in India at a time when popular ministries under the pretext of solving a famine crisis are tyrannically putting down all tendencies to "direct action" by labour for the improvement of its lot in this sorely-trying period of post-war economy. The Governments at the centre as well as in the provinces are unable to adopt a definite price policy or check effectively in practice soaring prices, criminal hoarding and hell-born black marketing; yet they complain against the lack of definite unified wage policy on the part of Indian Labour and choose to take away from trade unions their hard-won right to strike, without guaranteeing to them, in turn, adequate safeguards against unemployment and other incidents of social insecurity. The laws and administrative procedure forged recently in all provinces of India for the settlement of day-to-day trade disputes are definitely one-sided, loaded against the employees far more than against the employers; they involve such delays and offer such weak reliefs that they not only stultify the purpose of securing social peace for which they were originally intended but also have become a direct instrument of creating and continuing a kind of general Civil War between labour and capital on the one hand, and between labour and the general public on the other throughout the country. Adjudicators who preside over industrial tribunals are just legal luminaries innocent of the

fine shades of labour problems either in India or abroad, and they have no fundamental code to guide them in their decisions; it is pathetic to find one judge looking upon 'bonus' as an *ex-gratia* payment, while another finds something in the idea that it may be regarded as a legitimate claim of labour on the profits of industry. It is so with regard to every other 'industrial matter' which cannot justly be disposed of by the application of the ordinary Civil law of the land that can enforce only the terms of a contract between parties.

**The only
Basis of
Lasting Peace
is Social
Justice**

It is thus abundantly clear that labour has before it a long-term programme as well as a short-term one. The former will enthrone it; the latter will help it achieve its goal without violence and bloodshed. It is for the statesmen now in power to see the justice and the inevitability of these two programmes and co-operate with labour for building up a New World on the ruins of the Old, founded on social justice and hence bidding fair to ensure lasting peace. There is no other way of materializing the fair dreams of the sages and prophets of the East as well as of the West, who have looked upon all lives as one life and all souls as one Soul, who have thought in terms of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, who have preached the gospel of "Peace on Earth and Goodwill among Mankind" and who have furnished the age-long source of inspiration for the wise motto of the International Labour Organization, "*HUSBAND JUSTICE AND YE SHALL GARNER PEACE*".

ESTABLISH A REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE I.L.O. IN ASIA

V. B. KARNIK

A Branch of the I.L.O., functioning as a mere collector of routine information and as a mechanical agency for the distribution of literature is not the sort of body that the changed and changing circumstances and the special problems of the Asian countries demand. "What is essential is a more active, more energetic and more authoritative body which will act as the radiating centre for an ever-growing urge for a rapid advance towards the social objectives outlined in the Philadelphia Charter". What we should have is a Regional Office of the I.L.O. as the vigilant watch-dog of Asian Labour's advance. While making a plea for such a regional organisation, Shri V. B. Karnik hopes that the Asian

Member-States, meeting at the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference, will see the wisdom of establishing a Regional Office and agree to provide the requisite financial backing to support it.

Shri V. B. Karnik actually sees a happy augury in the holding of the Preparatory Asian Regional Conference as it synchronises with the onward movement for the complete liberation of Asia from the benumbing shackles of Western exploitation. Asia has now a new status and can walk the earth with a new dignity, with the hurdles projected by its former exploiters in the way of lining up with international social standards removed and the road cleared.

It is possible with nationalism in power in most of the Asian countries, nationalism supported by vested interests, efforts at industrialisation may not be accompanied by willing acceptance of social obligation on the part of industrialists and the Governments. This may queer the pitch for the I.L.O., in a manner of speaking. So the I.L.O. in Asia would have to watch industrial development as well, besides discharging its sworn duty of promoting the movement for increasing application of concepts of social justice to the life of the toiler.

Shri Karnik wants the I.L.O. to be more than a recommendatory body; the very future of the world may be "imperilled" if the Asian countries do not accept international standards—Asia may conceivably drag the rest of the world down. The I.L.O. must "shed itself of its European colour" if it is in earnest, about husbanding social justice in the East; its future depends upon how readily it can become truly international, organisationally and in spirit. The principal task that the I.L.O. has to shoulder, 'o justify its ways to the Asian People, is to constitute itself as the mentor, the supplier of the "motive force" for an ever-increasing pace of social advance.' There are many things that the I.L.O. can do, many specific tasks that have to be tackled, many problems, such as Forced Labour, the plight of the agriculturist and so on, inviting Scientific investigation. But the future of the I.L.O. in the East would be dependent upon the measure of disinterested objectivity it can bring to bear upon the problems that face it.

IT TOOK THE I.L.O. seventeen long years to put into practice its resolution passed in 1931, the convening of a regional conference in Asia. The I.L.O. may not be the only party to be blamed for this long delay between the decision and action. The Governments of Asian countries and of those European countries which held them in political bondage may be largely responsible for it. It is to be hoped, however, that it will not be the measure of the pace of the future activities of the I.L.O. in Asian countries.

The New Status of Asian Countries

The Preparatory Regional Conference is meeting at a very opportune time. Many of the Asian countries which were dependent so long are now sovereign independent nations. India and Pakistan are two notable instances of this new status of Asian countries. Phillipines stand on the same footing. Burma and Indo-China and Indonesia will join them very soon and the time is not far distant when the Asian conference will consist predominantly of delegations from independent countries of Asia. This new status of Asian countries removes the one great initial difficulty so long encountered by the I. L. O. in the way of the application of internationally accepted standards to workers in Asian countries. It was the opposition of metropolitan countries, which were usually reluctant to extend the application of those standards to their dependencies, that projected the difficulty. That is now a thing of the past. With the disappearance of that factor and the establishment of national states in most countries, the I, L. O. should now have a better prospect of securing adherence to international standards.

New Dangers and Difficulties for Old

There is, however, a danger inherent in the new political set-up, which it will be unwise to ignore. Each one of the nationally-independent countries will seek to utilise its newly-attained independence for developing industries within its territories. Each one will demand unfettered scope for developing industries. Obligation to provide humane and decent treatment to workers and to adhere to advanced standards of working and living conditions may be regarded by them as unnecessary fetters on their right to develop their industries rapidly and advantageously. They may contend that in order to compete with other industrialised countries they must be allowed to produce their goods

as cheaply as possible, they must not be weighed down with the obligation to conform to international standards. This has been the demand of industrialists from India and China since they started participating in international Labour Conferences. It will be put forward now by the Employers' group of all Asian countries and will, under the new political set-up, receive powerful support from the national government of each country. This will create fresh difficulties for the I. L. O. and will also necessitate on its part a close vigilance on the industrial development plans of all Asian countries.

**The I.L.O.
Has a Task
cut out for it
in Asia**

It is a matter of gratification that the I. L. O. has started taking interest in Asian countries just when many of them would be in a position to embark on ambitious schemes of industrial development. That may help in the avoidance of a repetition of the evils of industrial revolution in many of them. Without the powerful support of such an international organisation as the I. L. O., Asian workers will not be able to resist the pull of industrialists in favour of lower and lower costs of production and, in consequence, greater and more intensive exploitation of labour and other primary producers. By their own strength they will not be able to secure fair conditions and terms of employment. The presence in their midst of the close supervision of such an organisation as the I. L. O. will in this situation be of immense help. The I. L. O. will have to act as the watch-dog of the interests of workers including the producers of raw materials. It will have to see that decent and humane conditions of work and terms of employment are secured for workers and that the primary producers get a fair and reasonable price. It will have to ensure the application of international standards, not merely through the ratification of conventions and acceptance of recommendations, but through their actual enforcement. This is the first task of the I. L. O. in India and other Asian countries. If it fails in the task the standards of European and American workers will be imperilled, for they will not be able to resist long the downward pull that lower standards obtaining in Asia will exert on them.

**One Set of
Standards for
the Whole
World**

The Constitution of the I. L. O. contains in Article 19, paragraph 3, a principle of doubtful value. It says: "In framing any Recommendation or Draft Convention of general application the Conference shall have due regard to those

countries in which climatic conditions, the imperfect development of industrial organisation, or other special circumstances make the industrial conditions substantially different and shall suggest modifications, if any, which it considers may be required to meet the case of such countries." The provision had and has a certain temporary utility. It has enabled the ratification of certain Conventions by such backward countries as China and India. But it militates against the principle of common international standards throughout the world. India has pleaded too long her different climatic conditions, the imperfectness of her industrial organisation and her other special circumstances as an argument against the acceptance of many Conventions and Recommendations. How long can India and other Asian countries be allowed to put forward such a plea? A time must come when such a plea should not be available to any country and international standards should be uniformly applicable to all countries of the world. Now that the I.L.O. has started taking interest in Asian countries a time limit of 5 or 10 years should be set and conditions should be created for the deletion of that provision from its constitution.

**Make the
I.L.O.
Truly and
Genuinely
Inter-national**

In order to be able to influence the social policies of Asian countries, the I.L.O. will have to shed its present predominantly European colour. It is regarded at present as an European organisation interested only in the problems of European and, at the most, American workers. In Asian or African countries it is regarded more or less as an alien organisation. The feeling may be wrong, but it requires to be removed. The I.L.O. will, therefore, have to give to Asian and African countries a large representation in its governing as well as deliberative organs and also on its staff. And what is more important is a definite emphasis on the study and consideration of the problems of Asian workers. Asia is the home of more than one half of the world's population. The time, energy, and resources devoted to the study of the problems of this vast mass of humanity have been so far insignificant. That must change and the I.L.O. must become, in the real sense of the term, an international organisation both by virtue of its wide, all-embracing outlook as well as by virtue of its keen interest in the problems of workers of all climes, races and religions. Then alone

will the organisation acquire that moral claim and that high place in public esteem which alone will enable it to exercise its beneficial influence on the social policies of Asian countries.

**It must Create
Motive Force
of Social
Advance in
Asia**

One of the most important tasks that the I.L.O. can perform in Asian countries is the creation of an informed public opinion in favour of advanced social standards. Whatever may be the case in European or American countries, in Asia public opinion will play a vital role in all struggles for the amelioration of the conditions of industrial and agricultural workers. Progress in that direction will depend much on the state of public opinion. With an alert and educated public opinion, the working class movement will be able to achieve much in spite of its weakness and lack of proper organisation. Without the backing of such public opinion even a strong organisation may not be able to achieve anything. The I.L.O. can play an important part in bringing into existence this powerful motive force of social advance in backward countries of Asia. It may be alright for it to be, in Europe and America, more or less an academic organisation. In Asia, it should play a more positive and active role. It should not content itself only with the compilation of Reports and Studies but should take upon itself the task of creating public opinion in support of the conclusions reached in those Reports and Studies. It is not necessary for that purpose to be a propagandist body. What will be necessary will be more energetic activity to bring its conclusions to the notice of as wide a public as possible and as often as possible through circulation of literature, through public lectures, discussions, talks etc. *Education of legislators, journalists, leaders of trade and industry, trade unionists and public men should be the constant activity of the Office.* Information on standards reached in other countries, their beneficial effects upon social progress and of existing standards and their deleterious effects on society should be made constantly available to the public in each country of Asia. That will awaken social consciousness and make possible rapid progress towards the acceptance of international standards.

**Will I.L.O.
bring Indian
States into
line ?**

Apart from this general task which is common to all Asian countries the I.L.O. can perform a number of specific tasks in India. The first in importance will be to secure the progressive extension of international standards to territories

covered by Indian States. As things stood before 15th August 1947 none of the Conventions or Recommendations were applicable to them. One fifth of the Indian territory and one fourth of the Indian population were thus excluded from the benefits of the labours of the I.L.O. The situation has now undergone a slight change. Most of the States, barring such exceptions as Kashmir and Hyderabad, have acceded to the Indian Union or Pakistan. International obligations will, therefore, be automatically applicable to them. The Centre has, however, no right to interfere in the internal administration of States. Treatment of labour and administration of labour laws is a matter of internal administration. It will be a difficult task therefore to secure the actual fulfilment of international obligations in the States. The I.L.O. can keep a watchful eye on the matter and report to the Indian Union and Pakistan as well as the general public the infringement of the obligations. That will promote the exercise of the pressure of public opinion as well as the use of any other authority that the Governments of two Dominions may possess in favour of securing an early adherence to international standards. It can also help the States in drawing up the necessary legislative measures as well as in devising the proper administrative machinery. It has to be realised that unless labour standards in States are improved industry will tend to migrate to those territories in search of easy and high profits and the improvement of the conditions of Indian workers will become a very difficult if not an impossible task. The I.L.O. can play a very important role in bringing the Indian States in line with the rest of India and thus ensuring uniform standards all over the country. It is hoped that the I.L.O. will agree to play that role.

**The I.L.O.
has to think
of the Asian
Agriculturist**

It is the peculiarity of Asian countries, including India, that they are predominantly rural. The percentage of rural population in India is according to the 1941 census 87.2. The number of industrial workers is accordingly a very small percentage of the population. The I.L.O. has so far dealt predominantly with industrial workers. That was but natural in view of the conditions obtaining in Europe and America. The inspiration will have to change, the emphasis has to shift, however, if it is to do effective work in Asia. It will have to apply itself to the study of the problem of agricultural workers, including cultivating farmers and tenants.

The Office will have to embark on an entirely new branch of studies. It will have to find out through study and research how the principles of the International Labour Code, relating to hours of work, minimum wages, social security etc., can be made to apply to agricultural workers who have to work under entirely different conditions. New ways will have to be discovered for ensuring to them income security, protection against old age and invalidity, a decent standard of living and proper conditions of work and life. No attention has been so far paid to these problems. Very little information is available in India and other countries about the actual living and working conditions of the rural population. The Government of India decided a few months back to collect information about hours and wages of agricultural workers. No information is available about the progress made by the enquiry. The I.L.O. can undertake such an enquiry and also prepare schemes for providing to agricultural workers the benefits of protective and ameliorative schemes already in vogue for industrial workers. The preparation of such schemes and wide-spread knowledge about them will create the conditions for their adoption and execution by Governments.

Some Special Problems that Demand Investigation

Side by side with the study of the problems of a large class as the agriculturists, the I.L.O. can undertake the study of certain specific problems which are peculiar to Asian countries. To cite an example, the problem of forced labour, its existence, the manifold forms of its existence, its extent and the steps necessary for putting an end to it require to be investigated. Similarly a number of occupational diseases are not simply recognised in countries like India. An inquiry into the prevalence of a particular disease amongst a certain class of workers and the relation between it and their occupation will be of immense help, in the first instance, for providing relief to workers and, in the next instance, for taking suitable measures for ridding the industry of that occupational disease. The Central Government as well as Provincial and State Governments can undertake such inquiry. But they may not have the time or inclination to undertake them. Besides they lack the specialised skill and the disinterested outlook and objectivity that the I.L.O. possesses. Any such inquiry by the I.L.O. will, therefore, be of much greater value. Another useful branch of activity can

be the study of administration reports published from year to year by many Government departments, charged with the administration of certain measures. They give valuable information about conditions of life and work and also about the application of various statutory measures. The I.L.O. can study these reports from year to year and make on the basis of its specialised knowledge suggestions for the improvement of conditions as well as for stricter enforcement of statutory measures. If the suggestions are sent to the Government as well as to employers' and workers' organisations they can lead to useful improvement. One does not know when the I.L.O. will be entrusted with the authority of supervising in each country the application of international standards. Until such an authority is entrusted to it, it will be a good practice to insist on regular supply of all such administration reports and to provide for their study by competent persons and for the communication of its findings to the three parties represented in the organisation. Such a link-up will be of great advantage particularly to backward countries of Asia.

**Better
Employers'
and Workers'
Organisations**

Another useful line of work that the I.L.O. can and must immediately undertake is to help workers as well as employers in building up their organisations on sound lines. Workers will particularly appreciate the I.L.O.'S help and guidance in this matter. Trade Union movements in Asian countries are still in an initial stage. The rich experience gathered by similar movements in advanced countries will be of immense service to them. The I.L.O. can make it available to them as well as advise them on such matters as social welfare schemes, educational activities etc. Employers and their organisations may also like to get advice and guidance on such matters from the I.L.O. Thus the I.L.O. can, in addition to its other tasks, stimulate and help non-official activities in furtherance of the social objectives the attainment of which is its cardinal aim.

**Establish a
Regional
Office in Asia**

These are some of the activities that the I.L.O. can undertake in India and other Asian countries. In order to tackle the job effectively it will be necessary to create a Regional Office. It is to be hoped that the Preparatory Conference will decide in favour of its establishment and that the I.L.O. and the Member States from Asia will provide the funds that will be necessary for its proper functioning. It will

serve no useful purpose to have a mere Branch which will content itself only with routine collection of information and circulation of I.L.O. publications. What is essential is a more active, more energetic, and more authoritative body which will act as the radiating centre for an evergrowing urge for a rapid advance towards the social objectives outlined in the Philadelphia Charter. The I.L.O. has been all along a beneficial factor. Such of the special progress achieved in India and other Asian countries is due to the direct and indirect influence of the I.L.O. A little has been achieved, but much, a vast much, remains to be achieved. If the I.L.O. will undertake the activities outlined above it will substantially help the Asian people in their endeavours to achieve it.

SECTION VI
SOCIAL & ECONOMIC PLANNING

Contributors

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HOW THEN MUST THE STATE PLAN FOR LABOUR

T. L. A. ACHARYA

"Unilaterally, no Asian country will be able to provide an assured security for a good life to its masses. The plan must be an all-Asian Plan. I beg of our leaders to think in Asian terms, in terms, of the masses of Asia" is Shri Acharya's thesis. "We must get together before political frontiers degenerate into economic barriers, before inter-statal power politics engulfs Asia and clouds the vision, before militant nationalism immobilises our desire for Asian Unity".

The principal task of the Labour Planner is progressively but with an ever-accelerating pace to lessen the distance between the ultimate end and the immediate objective, between what is essential and what is practicable. The

present plight of our toiling masses is an insistent challenge to social effort. We cannot tarry, we cannot mark time ; bullock-cart method, the pedestrian technique will not do ; we must move fast to get anywhere ; we must discover a social dynamics that will force the pace of the much desired change ; we must move fast lest we become traitors to our thoughts. We must plan for dividends in human terms.

Shri Acharya asks for inter-Asian economic co operation as the one and only assured basis for Social Security for the Asian peoples, a planned security against starvation, a social bond for the employer, a charter of Workers' Education, training for labour leadership, a Labour Assistance and Information Service, a subsidised "feed the worker" service and a broad-based welfare service - all this as preparation for the ushering in of Social Democracy. The measure of our readiness to look at the problems of our "forgotton man" in this light is the measure of our social earnestness

The plan must be designed as a step towards the positivisation of freedom. Freedom of the individual is not freedom to be left alone—that would be in-substantial, shapeless, meaningless, hopelessly empty ; freedom of the individual carries with it an obligation on the part of organised society to give it a positive content, a positive substance, the positive aids, the positive instruments of a good life, a socially-conscious life, a socially useful life. If the individual is the unit of social democracy, the individual should not be allowed to get lost in the mass, the individual must be rescued, salvaged from the mass and mothered. As such, the State has an inescapable obligation to assist the individual.

"WESTERN MORALITY is quick at suppressing literature but slow at suppressing war; zealous in the abolition of obscene post-cards but luke-warm in the abolition of obscene slums; active in putting down white slavery but apathetic in putting down wage-slavery; alert in preventing vice but slothful in putting down starvation; shocked at clothing insufficient for purposes of modesty but indifferent to clothing insufficient for purposes of warmth. Its efforts are wholly successful in eliminating indecency but wholly unsuccessful in eliminating injustice. The morality of Western Culture is a scandal".¹

This is as good a text as any I can think of in the light of which I can say what I want to say. But has Eastern morality anything better to show, an Eastern morality, which has acquired a super-imposed incrustation of Western morality because of the West's essay in bearing the white Man's Burden?

**The Wide
Range of the
Planner's
Task**

How then must the State plan for Labour? The State *can* in a host of ways; the State *must* do a lot for labour in the context of present conditions: Unless the U.N.O. works a miracle and mobilises earnest international effort in the shortest possible time, a break-down of world economy appears to be inescapable, dragging India down, as it is bound to, into a disastrous morass; and insulation against the profoundly deleterious effects of such a catastrophe on the country and specially on labour has to be found. The employer who, from all accounts, is, admittedly, more or less—more not less—indifferent to his social responsibility must be compelled, wherever necessary, to shoulder it. In the absence of a comprehensive organised Trade Unionism, functioning as a vigilant watch-dog of labour interests, and also because of the scape-goaty pawn that labour has become in a competitive and warring bid for leadership (not service) on the part of political parties, it is the State's obligation to stand by labour and step into the breach. That would constitute real and worth while "Social Assistance". Such assistance becomes all the more unignorable imperative because of the relatively defenceless position in which labour is placed, what with a total and complete lack of education.

¹ Robert Breffault - *Sin and Sex*

Labour is a depressed sector of society anywhere --I use 'labour' in the larger sense, embracing the whole gamut of the toiling masses-- and terribly so in India in the present stage of her socio-economic development.

I

Plan an Asian Economic Hegemony as the only basis for Social Security

On the international plane, one hears the sound of warning bells everywhere that, as I have said before, unless a miracle is worked by the U.N.O., an economic collapse is imminent. While one hopes and even prays that it should not happen and fondly desires that it should not be allowed to happen, one cannot complacently ignore the clamant signs. Britain, having made the world safe against Fascism, is almost irretrievably in the economic deeps. It is not just the winter blitz that has pushed her down there. We, in India, have a crisis on the horizon. The much-advertised Marshall Plan is another big sign, nay, a portent. With all the fine verbiage in which the plan is enshrouded knocked out, it means that unless America discovers some quick means to sell more, her economy, which expanded beyond the dreams of her industrialists during the war, will break up and go down-hill. America has the goods and has in her to produce more but Europe and the rest of the world have not the resources --the Dollars! - to buy. So Europe must be saved. The world must be saved. That is what it means, rid of all the pomposities and grandiloquent phraseology with which it has been put across. America has to supply the wherewithal to enable Europe to buy, thereby artificially--how long can that go on? bolstering up her economy and keeping her wheels moving. "I will lend you to enable you to buy from me." America calls it a "Save Europe Now" plan and economic realism knows it as a desperate masked effort to ward off the depression that must inevitably come after the six years' total holocaust.

**The Hope of
"One World"
stands
shattered**

Here is something that should make us sit up and think. Here is a world in which a depression in one constituent part will automatically repercuss on all other parts. The fact is that when the depression starts anywhere, the undernourished, the ill-paid, the resistance-less Indian worker will

be hurt and he cannot stand any further hurt. There is no immediate or near-immediate hope of a 'one world' though we all know that without it we have all to sink together. The hope that the war-born co-operation would be carried into peace to forge an inter-dependent co-operative world stands, more or less, shattered.

**Asian
Economic
Hegemony—
Only Basis of
Social
Security**

I may perhaps be condemned as an impractical idealist or dubbed as a fool but for what my idea is worth I want to say that the most fundamental measure of Social Security that I can think of for Indian labour, in the absence of a world understanding, is even a loose but democratically wrought economic hegemony of Asia. I contemplate a hegemony not of the Marshall Plan type; I envisage the setting-up of an integrated Asian economic pattern as the only way of building up of and conserving the prosperity of the peoples of Asia. Asia is emerging from the shackles of colonial exploitation that have sapped it and made mince-meat of it and the time is now or never, as when each Asian country launches itself on an ego-centric road of nationalism, the spectacle of warring West will be repeated in Asia. Asia has the opportunity to demonstrate to the world the possibility of a social synthesis, thereby discharging her much vaunted cultural mission to the world. Asia, economically one is the basic step to Asia politically one.

**India should
Lead**

I suggest that an Asian economic hegemony based on active inter-Asian economic co-operation is the most fundamental item of Social Security that the Asian Governments can offer to their peoples. India must lead, here and now. That would afford a new instrument for social good, a new labour dynamics, with a hemispheric range. Modern history's one lesson is that economic development has organic repercussions on cultural development. An economically co-operative Asia is the most dependable, the most effective security for the unimpeded cultural development of the working-classes, the peoples of all the Asian countries. An organisation, with sanctions, for the promotion of inter-Asian economic co-operation must be discovered and set up at once.

“Man will never write,
they said before the alphabet came
and man at last began to write.”

'Man will never fly',
they said before the planes and blimps
zoomed and purred in arcs
winding their circles around the globe.

'Man will never make the United States of Europe
nor later yet the United States of the World,
No, you are going too far when you talk about one
world flag for the great Family of Nations',
they say that now.

And man the stumbler and finder, goes on,
man the dreamer of deep dreams,
man the shaper and maker,
man the answerer".¹

Nationally—Planned social security cannot, obviously, be dependable anymore. Such sectional security will be based on a foundation of sand. That is more than clear. To start with, we must plan socio-economic security with an Asian range and an Asian vision. Sectional and separatist social tinkering will not be of any avail. We must approach the problem with an attitude of disinterested objectivity.

II

Plan Security Against Starvation

Stop Profiteering in People's Food

How essential it is to hammer out the supra-Asian co-operative economic hegemony that I have projected and how desperately immediate the problem of over-crowded Asia is—it is admittedly a world problem—find their demonstration in the more than frantic efforts that the Indian Government are making to scour the world markets for food supplies, food supplies at any price. In spite of the unforgettable lessons, we have had, Sir John Boyd Orr's clarion cry for world planning of food supplies is a cry in the utter wilderness of competitive and fissiparous national sovereignties and the world's food is in the hands of an

¹ From his poem in *The People, Yes* by Carl Sandburg, the American Poet

unashamed profiteering—racketeering system to which the prospective death of millions of innocents is no consideration and which demands its pound of flesh even when millions and millions are at death's door. I speak of the profiteers at home and abroad.

"The 'sellers', the farmers of the Middle West and the politicians who demanded the abolition of controls, are not wicked men; they have not, like the Nazis, rejected humanitarian principles. *But that is the way business works. Uncontrolled private enterprise and freedom from want will not work together.*

"In the Indian Famine of 1943 it was reckoned that £70 profit was made for each death. This year human lives should be cheaper".¹

**Lest we
become
Traitors to
the Forgotten
Man**

£ 70 profit per death in 1943. What is it in 1947, what will it be in 1948, 1949, and 1950? From all accounts, it will not be rendered cheaper in Asia—where most of the deaths have occurred—unless Asia gets together and plans hemispherically. There *is* no other way. When we know that, we ought to do everything to get going that way; otherwise we are traitors to our thoughts, traitors to the "forgotten man". Mr. L. P. Jacks, the former President of the Manchester College, Oxford, has this: "There is no safety-clutch on the thinking faculty; there is no lightning-conductor on the house of thought".²

**A socio
economic
Minimum**

I say that rationing and price control of *all* food materials should become a normal feature of social life, now and always, and on an Asian scale. I say that speculation and private profiteering in the essential needs of the Asian man should be taboo. That represents a socio-economic minimum for Asian happiness, the essential first step towards the sort of Asian economic co-operation, Asian economic synthesis I contemplate.

Without such an arrangement, the Asian worker, the Asian peoples cannot have a worth while standard of living, the economic standard to support a spiritual standard. Without

¹ *They must not starve*, by Potiphar published as a serial in *The Left News*, April 1946 (italics mine).

² *The Art of living together.*

it, wage increases, bonuses and the like will not mean a thing; minimum wage legislation will just be a dead-~~est~~ letter. Living standards have to be properly buttressed by redoubtable and economic weather-proof pillars; make-shift props will not do. That is clear and it is written across the Asian sky, the world sky.

**Plan before
power
politics
engulfs Asia**

I suggest that the undeveloped and disorganised condition of Asia is not a handicap but an advantage in that we could get together without having to face any sinister form of obstruction or attempts at sabotage by powerful vested interests behind the smoke-screen of sacred national sovereignty. I am not just charmed by the prospect of my dream. I say there is no other way in which we can achieve what most of us earnestly desire. It must be an all-Asia affair or not at all as partial combinations will provoke other partial combinations and partial combinations breed conflict and power politics. We must get together before political frontiers degenerate into economic barriers, before inter-statal power politics engulfs Asia, and clouds the vision, before militant nationalism immobilises our desire for Asian Unity.

However desirable and necessary unilateral efforts at building up standards of life are, they cannot be more than ephemeral, cannot be, from the long-range view, more than palliative tinkering and as such must be accompanied by and securely based on an all-out Asian effort.

III

Plan a Social Bond for the Employer

**Industry
which cannot
Pay Living
Wage has no
Right to
Survive**

Speaking on a cut motion of Shri N. M. Joshi's in the Legislative assembly on March 11 of this year, the Labour Minister, the Hon'ble Shri Jagjivan Ram made the following statement: "One of the major objectives of Government's policy will be to secure to the workers the highest practicable standard of living *I have made it clear on more than one occasion that no industry which cannot afford to pay a living wage to its workers has a right to survive* and I can assure the House and assure the working classes that so long as I am here I shall work with that objective in view".

† Italics mine.

A very heartening assurance and most welcome.

**he
community—
supreme
partner in
industry**

The best and the most clear-thinking definition of economic development I have come across is that of Professor Eugene Staley's: "A combination of methods by which the capacity to produce (and hence to consume) may be increased". This definition provides a correct yard-stick; the major partner in industry, the supreme partner, with overriding powers of control is the community and industry must be controlled, socialised, harnessed and rendered purposeful in the interests of the community. The employer must be bound over, must readily accept a social bond, a social discipline in the interests of the community, Industry must be socialised, democratised.

**License and
Bind them
over for
Social Good**

I suggest that all employers must be LICENSED—not work-places merely registered—the license being renewable, every twelve months, the renewal being conditioned by the correct observance of certain codes of industrial behaviour.

"I have made it clear on more than one occasion that no industry which cannot afford to pay a living wage to its workers has a right to survive". the Labour Minister has asseverated. On the same showing, pursuing the thought that the utterance enshrines, no employer who does not provide elementary sanitary and welfare facilities for the work-people and is not ever-vigilant about the public health of the establishment, whose factory building and factory premises are in an unclean state, whose lighting and ventilation arrangements are inadequate or demonstrably bad, whose machinery is not provided with guards and other insulatory devices, who has not bothered himself about temperature control, who has not organised a safety committee and appointed a safety officer, who has not taken steps to control and prevent industrial hazards, who does not have a well-equipped creche or nursery for the children of his women employees, who has not provided a canteen as his share of the country's crusade against malnutrition, who is not a socially disciplinable employer "has no right to survive" and if he continues to be undisciplinable must be put out of commission.

Good and socially-aware employers would willingly accept statutory compulsion in the shape of a license; indifferent employers must be forced to become socially responsible and accept the discipline of a licence in the interests of the supreme partner in industry, the community.

**Enough
Provocation
for Statutory
Licensing of
Factories**

I am not going into the oft-repeated tale of the conditions in our factories, which are, admittedly, bad. An ill-ventilated factory in our sub-tropical atmosphere is a horror. This symposium actually carries some authentic accounts of the conditions under which the Indian worker, the producer-workman, has to function. The conditions are, to say the least, dismal. We have a terrible indictment from the medical angle in Dr. T. Bedford's "The Health of the Industrial Worker in India" ¹, from which I have quoted profusely in my article appearing in another section of this book. There is sufficient provocation for statutory licensing of all employers. That cannot be gainsaid. The worker has a *right* to demand good factory conditions, human working conditions, and the State has the social obligation to ensure that the employer provides them. World experience has shown that legislation can only stipulate minimum standards and with all the good intentions in the world enforcement of law can never be effective or enough, even in countries in which labour is educated and organised enough to watch and fight for its interests; world experience has also shown that preventive and protective legislation alone cannot answer the purpose however good-intentioned the employers are, however well-educated labour is and however active public opinion happens to be.

**They
Deducted
half-a-day's
Wage for the
Day he was
Killed!**

How essential socialisation and social control are and how utterly defenceless the worker could be and to what absurd lengths some employers have in them to go is seen from the following extract from Mr. Ness Edwards' speech in the House of Commons, on the 10th of June 1942.

"Let me just give one example which is causing trouble. The week before last, a collier came back from the Army and was sent to work in a colliery in the

¹ Report by Dr. T. Bedford, D. Sc., Ph. D., M. I. Min. E. of the Industrial Health Research Board of the Medical Research Council in the United Kingdom, published by the Department of Health, Government of India.

constituency I represent. He had been in the Army for two years and on the fifth day of his work at the colliery he was killed. The mining industry was more dangerous to him than the Army. He was killed in the middle of the day and his widow has sent me a letter to say that the colliery company, which clamoured for him to go back, deducted half a day's wages for the day on which the man was killed. Can we get a wholesome atmosphere in industry while that sort of thing goes on?" 1.

This fits into the industrial picture anywhere in the world, save, perhaps, the U. S. S. R.

**You Cannot
do it without
Licensing**

Industry cannot afford inefficient workers: the community cannot afford to tolerate indifferent employers. The workers' level of efficiency cannot be raised without human factory conditions, more food, a better and sustained standard of life, a better home environment, a greater and dependable sense of security of continued employment, a sense of belonging and facilities for adequate training and re-training; the employers indifference cannot be liquidated without socialisation, without harnessing them to the progressive betterment of the community, without compelling them to see that production is not for profit but for distribution, without making them see that they are no longer the major partner in industry and without *licensing* them for service.

IV

(a) Plan A Charter Of Workers' Education

**They are
Knowledge-
hungry**

Illiteracy and ignorance that only proper and adequate education can relieve must be liquidated with all the speed that we can muster. One of the most potent of causes of our social maladjustment and the real cause of the political and economic value or ability of the masses is, admittedly, their illiteracy, their total lack of education. This lack is only equalled by their yearning, by their insistent yearning, for light and the strength that light gives.

**Education
must be the
Heart-centre
of all
Planning**

A dynamic social philosophy demands that ultimate ends should become immediate inspirational objectives. We cannot pretend to have done anything about education of the masses except talk about it. The people have no voice and the voice

1 Hansard Vol. 360, Col. 1184 (quoted by Mr. Harold Wilson in his *New Deal for Coal*).

of the people one hears talked about is nothing more than what somebody described as "the ventriloquism of the press and the politicians". Our new-found freedom's goal is social democracy, if the declarations of our leaders and the stir in our hearts are any indication. But there is nothing to build social democracy on, social democracy in terms of economic and political emancipation of the masses. Education is the crux, and should be the centre-piece of all planning; education is the weapon that we must place in the hands of the worker. We have schemes, of course—the Sergeant Scheme, the Wardha Scheme and so on. Where is the person who has not got a scheme, today? We have a food famine and not a scheme famine. What we want is a Charter of Education, not just a phrase stuck into the Constitution but a live Charter, an implementable and self-implementing, charter, a charter which is not deterred by the convenient and orthodox governmental excuse of lack of funds.

**Don't say you
have No
Money and it
is Wrong to
Say it**

I must say a word or two about money. To me talk of lack of money, lack of financial resources, does not make sense. I have read books on money. I know the economist's Theory of Money, I know how a money famine can be engineered by a few; I know how the Pound, the Franc, the Dollar and the Rupee can be put to "flight"; and I know all about how banks can create money and destroy money. All the same, I hold that to say, at any time, that the State has no money for worth while developmental measures is nonsense, as money—not as the banker knows it—is nothing other than a national willingness to create wealth—social credit. I am not a Social Creditor in the sense that I swear by that philosophy as adumbrated by Major Douglas,¹ but the term social credit just hits the nail on the head. This is a heterodox view, unacceptable, say, to the Ministry of the Finance, but a view on the adoption of which the future of man depends. There are enough signs to indicate the Dollar Crisis!—that the world will be compelled to accept this economic philosophy when the brewing economic storm has blown over. For worth while things there is always money, in this sense.

Any way, there should always be money available for people's education, education to fit the people to come into

¹ Major Douglas is the original propounder of the theory of social credit. There is a social credit experiment in the State of Alberta, Canada.

their own, a benefit that the ruling classes in the world have extended, if at all, in a very reluctant, half-hearted and gingerly manner in order that they may escape political suicide.

**Freedom
Won—but
Freedom is at
Stake**

The whole country must go to school, must be *sent* to school. Turkey did it, Russia has done it and we can do it. It is a question of forcing people to be educated, forcing people to learn to be free. What we need is educational conscription, say with a ten-year target. Freedom has been won but freedom is at stake in the absence of broad-based education. Socialisation will be rendered progressively effortless as the burden of ignorance comes to be eased. The only way in which we can deromanticize Economic Narcissusism (a western bug which has found a home in the East) is to help our masses acquire, through correct and adequate education, the ability to rationalise their present unthinking and fatalistic attitudes towards the problems of social life.

**Educational
Conscription
of Double-
edged Type**

We must have a Charter of Workers' Education, a Charter of People's Education. We must have educational conscription of a double-edged type—conscription of all social agencies and conscription of the illiterate. I am not unaware of what is involved in the task, teachers, new text-books, new methods of teaching, accommodation to house the schools and so on. But can we afford to ignore this vital aspect of our national wants, our national lacunae? I think this very mammoth effort itself will release and consolidate a host of social forces potent enough to galvanise the country into a new life. The very atmosphere will present a new bright face, the brightness born of brave social effort.

**This is how
one can Set
about Doing it**

The Education Department of the Union must emerge as the Spear-head of the movement, lugging in the Provinces and the States, the Universities, all private and public social agencies and all employers. A new type of tax in the shape of service for all able-bodied literate men; conscription of university students as teachers for a stipulated period of time as a condition precedent to the grant of diplomas and degrees; conscription of university students (other than those above) to put in an hour's teaching every day as a part of the curriculum; a cess on each employer to cover the cost of educating and further-educating his employees; a certain standard of literacy as a basic condition for promotion or

higher wages; remission of a certain percentage of land revenue, on a group basis, to villages whose adult population becomes literate; provision of reading matter and agencies for further education for the new literates as an insulation against a relapse into illiteracy—all these and more, buttressed by an earnest and sustained compulsory primary education drive, should form part of the Charter of Education.

I think an Educational Charter and an Economic Charter should be woven into the constitution which is in the throes of gestation at the moment—freedom's gift to the common man. The best of political magna cartas, which are not at the same time socio-economic charters, have, in history, been prostituted by organised plutocracy. Education while you work and further education and fuller employment—that is what the Charter has to provide for.

(b) Plan Training for Labour Leadership

Allied to this, and no less important, is the problem of assisting labour, training labour for leadership. The State must take a hand in this task in an absolutely disinterested manner, by way of social recognition of labour's place in the scheme of things, by way of social recognition of the place of a well-knit Trade Union organisation in a civilised community.

**Our Trade
Unions are
not yet Fit
for the Great
Task**

Free India is committed to planning, planning now and planning for social democracy—morally committed. Planning and planning for social democracy involve the closest collaboration with the working-classes. The success of Soviet Russia's planning is based on this type of collaboration. Actually two draft plans are prepared, one by the Department responsible for planning and another by the producing unit and the two are linked together before the final plan emerges. The State in India has made a small beginning by way of consultative collaboration with Trade Unions in matters pertaining to labour and labour legislation. But the world trend is for greater and still greater collaboration, finding its consummation, in the ultimate, in socio-economic democracy. In India, this co-operative adventure will have to gather strength in scope and intensity. But are our Trade Unions fit for the task; have our Trade Unions the equipment and the leadership essential for the job? Not

to speak of social democracy, even under State Capitalism (or Nationalisation) Trade Unions have a positive role to play and our Unions are not ready to accept their destined function. As planning advances, if we are in dead earnest about the job, Trade Unions would have to participate, industry-wise, in finding workable solutions for the problems of 'recruitment, training, distribution and control of labour' besides the whole gamut of other human problems of industry. What is more, labour has, cut out for it, a number of international tasks. All these demand educated and conscientious leadership. Speaking of the future of British Trade Unions. Dr. N. Baron Says:

"To do that necessary job well the trade unions would be wise to forget a lot and learn a lot about their own industries and trade, about their technological processes, about their economic conditions, about their markets and about foreign competition. The trade unions will have to create a first-class general staff of their own, both technical and economic. Only then will they be able to play the part which the peaceful British revolution of 1945 so wonderfully and so fatefully assigns to them. It has conferred on them magnificent yet difficult human problems to solve, which can be happily solved, but only with courageous self-confidence and the intelligent help of the organised and better integrated forces of all the Labour Organisations of the country." 1

about
colleges

It is imperative that the State should take a hand and set up Labour Colleges in all principal industrial centres to afford training to workers in trade union leadership. Such a move would, perhaps, be suspect in some labour circles and its *bona fides* questioned. Any opposition that may arise is bound to wear itself out in time when the State's disinterestedness becomes self-evident. That would, to a great extent, depend upon the personnel selected to man the Colleges, their independence of out-look, their public spirit, their psychological understanding of the worker-mind and their ability to rationalise preconceived prejudices engendered by their up-bringing and education. If available, these personnel should be recruited from among the ranks of Trade Unionists.

1 *The Left News*, July 1946.

Create Confidence

The new Indian State has to create confidence in the minds of the masses by what it does and break the devitalising vicious circle of suspicion and authoritarianism that it has inherited as a legacy. Here is one of the ways in which it can be done, here is an item of socio-economic planning, a preparation for the India to come, the India which must come with undelayed speed, with all the constructive social enthusiasm we can command so that the common man, "the forgotten man", can come into his rightful own. We have to cover a lot of ground, quickly, and in the best manner given to us. We shall not be left behind. As somebody said if there are no Trade Unions it behoves society to "invent" them. We cannot afford socio-economic *laissez faire*; we cannot leave things to chance; we should not take shelter behind the all-too-common attitude of non-interference and say that developing correct leadership is the responsibility of the workers themselves. Our masses are utterly, utterly defenceless. The State needs Trade Unions and authentic Trade Union leadership; the State cannot function with any decent efficiency or social correctitude without properly-led Unions, the State cannot afford to mark time as it simply cannot afford to do so. Social development in India, in the nature of things, has to be purposefully assisted, actively fostered, intelligently planned. We cannot afford the bullock-cart method; we need must travel by jet-propelled air-craft. We have accepted new concepts of social justice and we have the insistent challenge of the spectacle of a whole nation living a sub-standard existence. We want a developmental locomotion of a fast type truthfully to concretize those concepts and whole-heartedly to answer that challenge. The results have to be phenomenal and we want a technique to achieve such results.

V

Plan a Labour Assistance Information Service

With a Trade Union movement that has just touched the fringe of the world of workers and, admittedly, weak at that, with the utter lack of strength and moral vigour that only education has in it to give and with the mental apathy and fatalism engendered by generations of malnutrition, it is no wonder that the Indian worker is practically defenceless, extremely vulnerable in so far as his relations with the

employer go, especially when he is at the mercy of a bad employer. He is in dire need of positive aid and of educative information and the State must provide them in full measure—not as a window display but as an earnest of its recognition of the worker's claim for his rightful place in society, as a part of a drive to assist the worker in acquiring confidence in himself, as a part of a programme to afford him strength to rise above himself and learn to stand four square and face the onslaught of a system that is not very friendly to him, as a part of a definite campaign to force the tempo and accelerate the pace of a much-needed social change.

Why the Worker is as Weak as He is

It is common knowledge that the one thing that saps the workers manhood and renders him weak, thereby making him his own enemy, is his ever present fear of being thrown out into the cold if he ever gathered enough courage to assert himself and fought for his rights. So he temporises, tolerates abuse with suppressed resentment, suffers maltreatment with a growing sense of hopelessness, stomachs petty tyranny as his pre-destined lot and practises unnecessary self-abnegation with a scrawny realised deepening of his social degradation, a further destruction of his personality.

The Agitator is an Advance-post of the New Order

In this light, the so-called "good boy" is a danger to society while the suspect, the mischief-monger, the trouble-maker, the agitator, the ring-leader, the revolutionary is a saviour. The one who gives an unadvertised behind-the-screen bribe to the foreman, to keep his job is a social menace while the one who openly revolts and slaps the tyrannous foreman in retaliation is an advance-post of a new order of things.

The principal task of Labour Planning is one of rehabilitation of the worker's personality a personality that has got stunted through generations of sub-standard living, with the desire for self-assertion blunted almost beyond repair, with the springs of action sapped by an over-powering sense of fatalism. I am thinking of the workers in general; they have to be taught to sit up and think for themselves, to understand the environmental influences that play tricks with their lives, to acquire a sense of rightful belonging, to find their place and to hold their own—to see that they are victims of a structural maladjustment.

Petty Tyranny and Harassment

It is common knowledge that petty tyranny and harassment on the part of the management's underlings exist; it is common knowledge that men are thrown out on the flimsiest of

excuses and for minor offences; it is common knowledge that with few-all-too-few-exceptions Trade Unions, where they exist, are deplorably weak and generally do not play the watch-dog of individual interests or bother about the "individual case"; it is common knowledge that there is little or no organised relief to the individual worker as against the employer; it is common knowledge that many compensable injuries never even as much as see the light of day, sometimes because the worker is in collusion with the employer and often because the worker is unaware of his statutory entitlement and there is nobody to tell him that he is; it is common knowledge that the workers case mostly goes by default and that socially he is left in the lurch.

**When the Individual is
host sight of
Fascism
Raises its
Head**

It may sound insufferably platitudinous but I must say that it is the sum-total of individuals that forms the mass and that in the desire to idealise the mass the individual is completely and absolutely forgotten; in the attempt to build up an ideology of the mass, the individual is lost, his interest neglected, his happiness side-tracked, his safety jeopardised. The individual is nobody's business. He is steam-rolled into an unholy mess of a mass. When the individual is lost sight of Fascism is just round the corner. All the philosophies and 'isms' that lose sight of the individual are fundamentally Fascist, really totalitarian, however much their protagonists may shout, (in the name of Democracy) from the house-tops. Any creed that tends to obscure the individual is an enemy of democracy and, as such, inescapably Fascist in effect. The individual must be freed from the mass, must be salvaged from the mass, must be protected, must be nursed as such. The individual is the foundational unit of social democracy and so his needs and his position must form the inspiration of legislation, the basis of social policy. It is not a question of deification of the individual as opposed to deification of the mass but placing of the individual where he belongs, in his rightful niche as the corner-stone of democracy.

The State has to befriend the individual worker. Towards this end, the State must plan a well-integrated Assistance and Information Service, with a statutory backing.

**A comprehensive
Three-
fold cover**

What the position demands is a legislative measure of the type of the Mexican Federal Labour Act 1941, but far more comprehensive, providing for the setting up of an Assistance

and Information Service in all major industrial centres and for groups of areas over which industries, big and small, are scattered. The Service should afford a three-fold cover:

- (a) Conciliation (already provided)
- (b) Legal assistance
- (c) Advice and Information

Item (a) does not need any elaboration. The country is not unaware of its importance and its utility.

Item (b) will be something in the nature of an innovation, a worth-while one. What producer-workmen need is not a good-intentioned Poor Man's Lawyer of the Salvation Army type but a State-provided Labour Lawyer or Solicitor, with an adequate staff of assistants, to protect their interests in their dual capacity as citizens and as employees, to advise and represent them and the Trade Unions in Courts of Law, to assist them in the formation of Trade Unions and co-operative institutions, where necessary, to demand of the employer correct observance of statutory social regulations (other than, perhaps, the Factories Act), to interfere on their behalf in cases of wrongful dismissal and the like and generally to function as their legal friend—philosopher—guide.

Legal Assistance

I think legal assistance of the above description is as essential as good wages, proper education and good housing. The worker's defencelessness his vulnerability, his helplessness as against the array of forces that face him must be progressively, but quickly, liquidated. He is shockingly helpless in the matter of fighting for his rights, in his relations with money-lenders and the like. I hold it is the State's obligation to afford legal assistance in the fullest measure possible. I want to see the immediate emergence of a Statutory legal watch-dog, a Labour Solicitor.

A Citizenship Advice and Information Bureau

Item (c) is self-explanatory. The Labour Service Centre in each area should have a Citizenship Advice and Information Bureau attached to it. The worker needs assistance in a thousand ways. Many a worker there is who cannot write a post-card home or fill in a Money order form. He does not know a thing about taxes, about rent control, about a hundred different things he should know about his place in the scheme of things. I can give an imposing list of

essential matters on which he needs correct and dependable enlightenment. The Labour Centre must constitute itself into a Workers' Encyclopaedia. What he is in dire need of is an organised source to which he can turn at all times for advice and information.

**What
Freedom
ought to
Mean to the
Worker**

Freedom of the individual citizen is not freedom to be left alone - that would be insubstantial, shapeless, meaningless, hopelessly empty: freedom of the individual carries with it an obligation on the part of organised society to give a positive content, a positive substance a positive filling in of the means, the aids, the instruments of a good life, a socially conscious life, a socially useful life.

A Labour Service Centre of the type I have projected should be able to put the worker on his feet.

VI

Plan a Subsidised "Feed the Worker" Service

It is an oft-told tale, the tale of India's under-nourishment, India's continental malnutrition, the tale of what has come to be described as "HIDDEN HUNGER". Hundreds of years of hidden hunger, generations of hidden hunger, resulting in a nation-wide condition of "Sub-health".

**Feed Him
Better and
Ask Him
to Produce
More**

With our new found freedom, we are now at the cross-roads, we have to choose the road of increased production greater and still greater production, in order that we may raise our depressed standards of living. We must produce more and distribute better but the producer-workman is an under-nourished person, with little or no staminal vigour to bear the brunt of the all-out effort he has to make to produce more, an effort that is bound to hurt his physique still more if an adequate nutritional cover was not afforded. Our position bristles with seemingly insoluble problems and the question of a nutritional cover is one of them. Its importance cannot be exaggerated or under-estimated. It is a problem of problems, demanding a frontal unswerving assault. What with the dismal food position, with little hope of any immediate improvement or relief, further deterioration is inevitable. It is horrible to contemplate what the condition of our masses will be if the process of deterioration, whose pace was quickened by the conditions engendered by the war

continues unabated for any length of time, if the deadly blight of malnutrition has an unimpeded sway.

It is all a terrible vicious circle—we must produce at our souls' peril if we are in earnest about national rehabilitation, if we are in earnest about raising the standard of living of our people; but we do not have the strength to bear the physical strain that accompanies the effort. We must wriggle out somehow and we will. We cannot achieve spectacular results, as the circle of the plethora of our limitations cannot be broken in a meteoric way.

It is the producer-workman who has to shoulder the heaviest burden and the rest of the population must accept a self-denying interdict, must practise self-abnegation, so that he could have a little more. We must give what he needs without stint to help us all and help himself whole-heartedly.

**The Worker
must be Fed
Free as an
Addition to
Wages**

The logic of the position demands that the producer-workman must be adequately fed. We have legislation enjoining employers to provide a Canteen Service. But it does not say what should be provided and at what price. What boots it to have a Canteen which sells a meal that the worker cannot afford to buy? I think the worker must be fed free, on a resistance-yielding meal, as an un-reluctantly proffered addition to wages, as a willingly given reward for his part in the national effort to raise the people's standard of living. To the extent of rendering possible the supply of a free meal to his men the Canteen Service should be *subsidised* by the employer. We want the worker to be a hero and we must give him the equipment for playing the hero in a reasonably sustained manner. You cannot make a hero of an under-fed, under-nourished worker. The obligation to feed him—one good meal a day—should be a statutory obligation. Social compulsion is essential to achieve the objective. Increased wages, as such, will not help, as money does not mean a thing, what with the bloated cost of living; economists would tell you higher wages without a corresponding increase in production make the position much worse what with a spiral of inflation and high prices. Even otherwise, the worker does not know what to eat as he never had a chance to sit back and think what he should eat. He must be given what is essential to enable him gladly to work and cheerfully to participate in the mammoth task of national reconstruction,

of preparation for social democracy. Subsidisation is inescapable and a free meal represents the irreducible quantum of assistance that the employer must perforce afford. All else would be in the nature of toying with an idea, would just be futile, would be purposeless. A positive need demands a positive approach.

Plan a Model Canteen I think the Department of Labour at the Centre should run a model Canteen in Delhi as a spear-head of a canteen movement in the country, a laboratory for conducting experiments in a nutritionally balanced dietary, a training college for canteen managers and other types of essential Canteen Staff, a central inspirational source for industrial canteens and an effective demonstration centre of what is possible, the type of furniture to be used, the type of equipment that a canteen should have.

Assist the Employer Furthermore, the State should set up an organization to assist the employer to procure the essential food-materials and the other odds and ends at rock-bottom whole-sale rates. One cannot ask the employer to buy his canteen requirements in the open market and yet expect him and to compel him to provide a free noon day meal for his men. This central organization should make itself responsible for the production and supply of canteen equipment.

An Investment that Pays Human Dividends All this may sound like a 'tall order', impracticable, exaggerated, painting thick; but a clear-thinking realistic appraisal would reveal that there is no other way out. If the fact of malnutrition is accepted as a terrible blight that demands progressive liquidation, if a well-nourished army of producer-workmen is the fundament of India's social progress, well, we must go at it with a will—the problem has to be faced squarely in the face and the price paid as an inescapable but a worthwhile social investment.

VII

Plan A Broad-Based Welfare Service

Welfare, as it has come to be used and practised by the average employer is so narrow, in effect, so restricted, sounds so extra-curricular, in most cases, so half-hearted, so unashamedly *ex-gratia*, so smacking of cheap charity that it is, perhaps, the wrong word to convey what I have in mind.

Welfare in the sense of well-being is what welfare ought to mean; in that larger sense society would have the responsibility for the welfare of the citizen-individual from the pre-natal stage to the grave and the employer from the day his man enters service up to his retirement and beyond i. e. with retirement benefits to render the evening of his life smooth and care-free. When the producer-workman has an inviolable right to welfare, to be looked after, anything that smacks of charity, anything that is not designed as a promoter of unflinching respect for human rights is an insult to his personality and derogatory to his status as an essential social servant. In the sense of an unignorable right to be looked after, my whole thesis is a thesis on welfare, on planning for labour welfare. Welfare so far as the producer-workman goes is the increasing application of ever-deepening concepts of social justice to the demands of his life as an active member of the community, as a service-yielding citizen. Welfare in the sense I have used it is an organised social endeavour for the increasing recognition of "fundamental freedoms", an endeavour to achieve a socially-integrated order of fundamental values, an endeavour to build up a code of social ethics on the basis of regard for individual human rights. That is what welfare ought to mean not just the provision of a first-aid box, a volleyball ground or an earthen-pot for storage of drinking water.

A Labour Welfare Act

I think what the State should do is to put on the Statute Book something in the nature of the Labour Welfare Act, 1943, of the Province of Alberta (Canada), something more comprehensive, as the harbinger of a Labour Welfare Code. Among other things, the Labour Welfare Act should legislate for the following:

Guarantee Worker's Right to Work

a No worker should be discharged from employment unless the discharge has been endorsed by a Labour Court. Provision of insulation against wilful, flimsy, undeserved, retaliatory and wrongful discharge logically flows from respect for the producer-workman's fundamental right to work, his fundamental freedom from want. This is not to tie the hands of the employer but to protect him from the inanities, the petty tyranny, the high-handedness of his executives; to protect him from hasty action, to enable him to rationalise his temper, to protect him from himself. If the discharges of workmen by all employers in the country

in the course of any twelve months were to be placed for review before a judicial body of public men, I am sure that most of the men would be reinstated in employment.

**Have a
Doctor on the
Staff**

b. The state of the nation's health, especially the condition of resistance-less sub-health in which our working masses are, demands certain elementary provisions: pre-employment medical examination, periodical medical examination, mass chest radiography, physical rehabilitation of those who are found to have curable ailments. It is a shocking commentary on our social fervour that the employer is not obliged to have a medical man on his staff with a well-equipped dispensary. I think it is essential statutorily to compel the employer with, say, a complement of 200 or more men, to have a dispensary and a medical man who has also specialised in Industrial Medicine and Industrial Hygiene, as a vital supplement to what the State Insurance Bill seeks to provide. In the case of small-way employers, they should be obliged to undertake the provision of medical amenities on a group-cum-area basis

**Rehabilitation
of the Injured**

c. What is Industry's responsibility for the rehabilitation of injured workmen, incapacitated workmen? Does the responsibility stop with payment of compensation? It is well-known that the present scales of compensation are dreadfully on the low-side, niggardly, in all conscience. But could we say that compensation for the loss of a limb could ever be adequate? Is not there a moral responsibility on the part of the employer to rehabilitate the injured employee, furnish him with an artificial limb and refit him for service under him? I think the most desirable, the socially correct, the psychologically friendly thing to do is for the employer to strive, with all the earnestness he can muster, to put the man back in his old job. That is what rehabilitation means—nothing less. Rehabilitation experiments have proved that the best insurance against the rehabilitated person, nursing and letting his imagined or real disability becoming or developing or degenerating into an insurmountable barrier to permanent rehabilitation is to arrange to slide him back into his pre-accident atmosphere unobtrusively, without fuss, without the all-too-common show of pity that hurts and rankles. As things stand at present, there is no compulsion to get the employer to look after the injured in this manner—if the injury is

compensable, compensation is paid, often, as a result of Court proceedings and, often, after unconscionable delay and then the man is forgotten, perhaps, thrown on the social scrap-heap. Where is welfare? If a census of these socially neglected people were taken, a ghastly story of culpable indifference would be revealed. There is no man-power famine and, so, why bother? Here again, the State must step in and get the employer to play cricket, as they say.

Food Management

d. If feeding the worker, at work, were accepted as a socially essential measure of welfare, on the same showing, assisting him in feeding his family and himself while at home should also be accepted by the employer as a part of his obligation to his employees. I think, here again a statutory injunction is necessary. All fairly large-sized industrial establishments should be obliged to run grain-shops, with the direct assistance of the State in the matter of actual provisioning of the shops, something on the lines of the arrangements for the supply of food-grains that the Employers' Association of Northern India have instituted in Cawnpore. The Railway Board's organization for the procurement and supply of essential food-grains, groceries and other odds and ends is an object-lesson in what I may describe as the employer's share in India's food management. Central Organisations for this purpose could be set up on a regional basis with local branches in all principal areas. There is no reason why the shops should not be co-operative units, actually, the ideal shop would be a multi-purpose one—food materials, groceries, fuel, cloth, ordinary drugs, patent medicines, and so on, covering the whole range of the workers' ordinary requirements with an organisation for wholesale procurement and supply, with the middleman liquidated, it should be possible for the employer to offer a worthwhile employee-service. Of course, law should guarantee an uninterrupted service during strikes and lock-outs. The vital importance of this service, this form of social assistance cannot be too strongly emphasised. The point is positive insulation against everything that hurts the producer workman must be discovered and provided as a matter of right.

Blue-print for Welfare

The measures I have indicated above are in the nature of rough outlines of a blue-print for welfare, a charter of welfare. More details have to be filled in as we go along.

Freedom has to be positivised and here is a programme of sorts, a skeleton programme for such positivisation. We all realise that freedom should be made to mean a lot to our people; we know that we have to work our way up from the base of the socio economic structure and create a consciously-constructed pattern.

I have covered a good bit of ground under the above seven broad heads, stating the principles but without going into details. Even as it is I have transgressed the space-limit.

**The Task of
the Labour
Planner**

The main task of the Labour Planner is to lessen with an ever increasing tempo the distance between the ultimate end and the immediate objective, between what is essential and what is practicable and get the two to coalesce at a not very distant date. We cannot afford the pedestrian technique and we know how urgent the task is, how agonisingly distressing the plight of the producer-workman is. We cannot afford to put off the good work. The only obstacle in our path is our own apathy, our own lack of properly keyed-up social enthusiasm. If we are in earnest we must move fast we cannot be traitors to our thoughts, to ourselves.

**Think in
all-Asian
terms**

I must repeat that, we, in India, have a sterling opportunity to break new ground, to get Asia together, to unify much-battered Asia, I must repeat that it is now or never; I must repeat that, unilaterally, no Asian country will be able to provide an assured security for a good life to its masses. The plan must be an all Asian Plan. I beg of our leaders to think in Asian terms, in terms of the masses of Asia. That is the soul of the Plan.

SOCIAL TARGETS OF A NEW DEAL FOR LABOUR

G. D. BIRLA

When an employer of Shri Birla's eminence projects 'A HUNDRED-RUPEES' monthly wage as the minimum for a life of "Complete Comfort" for the Indian Factory Worker, he deserves to be heard by all, especially by his brother employers in the country. But the drive for a New Deal For Labour must be securely buttressed by a national drive "to work better and work more". Shri Birla thinks we are all almost insane to look for plenty when we ourselves are deliberately creating scarcity through what amounts to nation-wide lethargy. We ask for more and still more—"the industrialist is demanding larger profits, the worker higher wages, the officer higher salaries, the agriculturist higher

prices for his products and the craftsman higher value for his work".

Shri Birla actually draws a picture of an idle nation and says that we must bestir ourselves and make the wheels of industry hum the song of prosperity.

He sets Social Targets for a New Deal For Labour – "a comfortable standard of living for all workers with reasonable leisure, healthy houses, clean surroundings, arrangements for education for their children and provision for sickness and old age". He warns employers that all defective conditions which yield to short-term handling must be remedied without delay, remedied here and now. He wants the natural handicaps to hard work –insufficient and ill-balanced diet--removed by placing "Feeding the Worker" at the top of the Employers' Agenda. He warns Labour Leaders that their opposition to rationalisation would throw a hurdle in the path of prosperity ; he does not anticipate unemployment but a dearth of skilled labour. He sees a vicious circle engendered by the low expectation of life, malnutrition and lethargy and wants a long-term assault to break that circle. He warns that no single class can look for prosperity or social advantage as that would be at the expense of the community. The whole nation must go to work, with a will.

WHEN we think of labour problems generally we have in mind only such workers who are working in factories and who number only about 27 lakhs. We altogether ignore many hundreds of thousands of other workers working in different fields who, if added together, will number nearly a little above five crores. The largest among them is the group belonging to agricultural labour which, according to 1931 census, numbered 3,30,00,000 and which by now must have risen to nearly 3,70,00,000. How the total number of workers is distributed in various industries is given in the table below :

TABLE

		(In Thousands)
1.	Total factory labour ...	2,643
2.	Labour in Handloom industry ...	6,000
3.	Labour in Khadi industry ...	275
4.	Labour employed in Rice hand-pounding	5,250
5.	Labour in mines ...	365
6.	Labour in plantations ...	1,091
7.	Rikshaw pullers ...	41
8.	C. P. W. D. ...	150
9.	Municipal workers ...	36
10.	Dockyard workers ...	45
11.	Port workers ...	171
12.	Coir Industry ...	160
13.	Non-factory labour in railways ...	900
14.	Agricultural workers ...	33,000
Total ...		50,007

This only reminds us of the central factor that when we plan to solve labour problems it is not the factory alone which has to be covered but a huge population which amounts to more than one-eighth of the total population of India.

**Prosperity of
India is
Indivisible**

It is often said that prosperity is indivisible. This maxim may be questioned. But none can dispute the assertion that the prosperity of India is not divisible. You cannot create prosperity of a vast section of the population without

creating prosperity of the whole. The prosperity of the worker, therefore, cannot be isolated from that of the total population which was nearly 40 crores until recently when some Muslim areas decided to secede from India proper.

In 1942 it was estimated that the average per capita income of India was about Rs. 115/- per annum which now, due to higher prices, must be approximately Rs. 175. The average income, however, of the factory worker is much higher. The highest paid worker is to be found in the Textile and Engineering field where the average earning of a worker at present would be nearly Rs. 900/- per annum. The railway worker comes next. The average earning of a worker in coal mines would be at an average not more than, according to 1945 figures, Rs. 300/- per annum. In tea plantations it is still less. The earnings in the handloom industry would still be lower and Khadi perhaps would come at the bottom. In the non-industrial field, the lowest income is perhaps of the agricultural labourer whose income even today would not be more than Rs. 200/- per annum. As is usual in every country, so in India, the income structure even at the lower strata of the society is extremely variegated. The average is only Rs. 175/- per annum rising to nearly Rs. 900/- per annum in the Textile and Engineering Industries and still higher in highly skilled jobs.

Increased National Wealth alone can help us achieve our Targets

From this pattern we could visualise our future targets. It must be a comfortable standard of living for all workers with reasonable leisure, healthy houses, clean surroundings, arrangement for education for their children and, provision for sickness and old age. But how is it to be achieved? To achieve this for the factory labour alone would be comparatively an easy task since their number is only 27 lakhs. But it should not be forgotten that if the total wealth remains constant, and yet the standard of a section is raised, the rest must suffer. To raise the highest paid to still higher a level, we must raise the whole. Increased national wealth alone thus can take us to the desired goal. This central truth must be completely realised by all well-wishers of labour.

First things First—Housing

Let us examine the colossal nature of the task before us. Even if we dealt only with the question of the 27 lakhs factory workers, the first thing that needs attention is the housing problem. One ordinary double-roomed tenement these days

costs Rs. 3,000/- per unit. If we assumed that half of the present factory labour could comfortably be accommodated in the houses already in existence, then we have still to provide for at least the rest of the 13 lakhs workers. At the rate of Rs. 3,000/- per unit, the cost of such provision would be Rs. 390 crores. As most of the industries are in the Hindu India and houses have to be provided in that area, the cost eventually must be borne by the Hindu India the population of which would be about 31 crores. This comes to about Rs. 12/8 per capita. If spread over ten years, it would not be a heavy burden. But this is not the only expenditure which new India has to bear. A lot of recurring expenditure will have to be incurred in future and where-withal found.

For instance, education alone, at a stage would cost not less than Rs. 150 crores a year. Health, sanitation, roads, and other social services must cost an enormous sum and it would not be far wrong to say that all these would mean a recurring expenditure of at least 25 rupees per capita every year after a certain time. Over and above this, huge capital expenditure would be needed for all kinds of productive and unproductive projects which the nation will have to find. Will this be within the means of the nation if the present per capita income of Rs. 175/- remains unchanged? Obviously not. So eventually we come to this. More production to increase our national earnings is the only remedy.

**A Display of
Irresponsi-
bility all
along the line**

Yet how amazing, that the man in the street has totally missed this truth! The layman still seems to be going with the notion that everybody has only to make demands and then refuse to work so long as the demands are not met, and the rest is a matter of routine. We have all developed an irresponsible psychology at present, perhaps because of our continuous political struggle when we put all the emphasis on our rights and none on our obligations. And so the industrialist is demanding larger profits, the worker higher wages, the officer higher salaries, the agriculturist higher prices for his products and the craftsman higher value for his work. And simultaneously everybody seems to hold fast to the notion that all this could be achieved without hard work, or rather through deliberate idleness. We seem to be wanting some one else to work hard; reserving idleness for ourselves. This psychology will have to be changed by all concerned.

**Produce More
and Earn the
Right for
More**

Nor is it realised that added wealth can come not by increasing profits or prices or wages but through producing more. The present price structure need not be disturbed. Larger gains will not come out of increased prices but through increased work. Larger turnover and lower prices with still cheaper cost of production can give, in fact, better profits to the manufacturer, the agriculturist, and the craftsman. Same rate of wages but more production per man hour can give higher wages to the worker. The officer and the clerk can earn more by working hard and yet remedy is sought through idleness which seems to be the craze of the day.

This idleness has come to us in many ways. Scaring speeches from the political leaders have created an uncertainty among the capitalistic class with the result that those who were making large plans for big expansions have cold-stored all their new projects. This must, in the long run, cause a serious set-back for new production. On the other hand, the existing production has been adversely affected by strikes, reduced working hours, absenteeism, deliberate slowdown by the workers and communal riots and lack of security. We have thus suffered on an immediate as well as on a distant front.

**Rationalisa-
tion is a Vital
Need but
Union Leaders
do not see it**

Besides, the labour leaders in order to gain popularity are vieing with each other in developing an unconstructive mentality. Every move for rationalisation—the only method of raising the standard of the worker—is strongly opposed by the Unions and their leaders. Three shift working that can create new employment and new production is opposed.

The agriculturist also is not interested in producing more because he finds it difficult to exchange his products with consumer goods and does not desire to convert his products merely in currency notes.

Thus it looks as if an unconscious alliance has been made in all fields between all the producing sections *viz.*, the industrialist, the worker and the agriculturist to produce less and demand more. Surely we must be living in an insane world to demand plenty out of scarcity that we ourselves are deliberately creating.'

A Picture of an Idle Nation

In the European countries and in America, people prepare statistics of the unemployed. No such statistics are available here but if one prepares a chart of our total idleness we should find how little we are putting up and how big we are expecting. If we realised how people, these days, on the smallest pretext go on strike, how people leave their shops, business or factories because of some thread ceremony or a marriage of a relation or a funeral or a *shraadh*, how thousands sit on the banks of rivers doing nothing but performing the so-called poojah, how thousands daily spend their time in hundreds of places listening to leaders' lectures or giving them addresses or making preparation to welcome them and have their *darshan*, how hundreds of thousands have to run hither and thither in panic or migrate to safer places and doing nothing, or sit at homes defending themselves against communal attacks, how hundreds of thousands go without work because of curfews, and how millions waste their time in their villages practically loitering and idling away their time, it is only then that we know the colossal amount of national wealth that we are wasting every day.

The first thing we have to do is to discard idleness, forced or voluntary, and wasteful ceremonies and unproductive habits. Holidays must be reduced. Leaders should give a lead by not collecting thousands and talking to them boring rigmaroles.

Feeding the Worker— Put it on Top of the Agenda

There are, however, some natural handicaps in the way of hard work, and more production which needs immediate correction. The first handicap is the lack of vitality among the workers due to insufficient and ill-balanced diet. Even where the wages are high, workers of every province do not spend enough on diet. Men from the Punjab for instance spend more on food than men from Orissa. Generations of poverty have created faulty dietary habits which are not always conducive to good health and hard working. The climatic conditions at some places are against hard work, unless diet comes to aid. If a man is to put in hard work he must have, not two but three good square meals with all the elements to balance it. Bad housing conditions insanitary or bad working conditions in the factory are some of the other factors working against increased production. All these need looking into. But the question of diet must be put on the top of the agenda.

It is good that canteens are getting popular these days among the workers. But neither all the factories have got canteens nor all the workers take their food from the canteens. Whether it is possible to pay a portion of the wages in three good and balanced meals is a question which should be examined by the employers in conjunction with labour leaders. The question of housing is a long-term problem but such defects in the general working condition as could be corrected immediately should be done without delay.

Over-haul the Wage Structure

In short, all short-term measures that hinder production should be solved without delay. And among these comes the question of strikes and absenteeism. Ninety-five per cent of the strikes are related directly or indirectly to the question of wages. It is essential therefore that the whole wage structure in India should be so thoroughly overhauled as to make it acceptable on a long-term basis to both the employers and the employees. At present there is no uniformity in wages. In the same industry, in the same province, we have got different rates of wages. Standardisation is the urgent need.

Rs. 100/- a month is just about Right

The future wage structure should be related to cost of living and production. The wages should be on a reasonably high level giving the worker complete comfort. I personally think that the average wage of a factory worker should be near about Rs. 100/- per month which should give the worker, on the present cost basis, a good return for his work. Perhaps the minimum, consolidated with dearness allowance etc., would be about Rs. 80/- and the maximum Rs. 130/- to Rs. 150. But this should be definitely related to production per man hour. An efficient worker putting in conscientiously hard work and giving a reasonable out-turn should receive such wages. Good wages bring definite returns to the industry. But if the wages are not related to the volume of work, then it goes only to promote idleness and discontent.

There may even be Dearth of Labour

In setting up a new pattern of wage structure, we should not ignore the question of rationalisation. The Indian worker's standard would never be raised unless he is prepared to accept the newest method of production. He cannot continue to insist on two-loom work when the American worker takes up as many as forty automatic looms. The hue and cry often raised by that labour leaders against rationalisation,

on the plea that it would create unemployment is erroneous. If India is to expand, she will need so much extra labour that it will be almost impossible for the country to create new supplies of skilled workers within a short time. The only alternative, therefore, is to introduce rationalisation—introduction of modern plants thereby saving labour, reducing cost of production, and utilising retrenched labour in expansion. Far from there being unemployment, there is going to be a great dearth of labour in the coming years if we could expand according to our ambitions and plans.

Once reasons for strikes are eliminated and strikes made to disappear, the way for a forward march would be clear. But the necessity for closer collaboration between the workers and the employers should not be under-estimated. Both have to realise that none of them can get reward without hard work and closer collaboration. Deliberate absenteeism should be stopped.

**As a Nation
We have
Very Little
'Working-
time'**

Thus by tackling the problems of diet, working conditions and strikes etc., we travel a long way towards greater production. But there is another very serious matter which can be tackled only on a long-term basis and that is the short span of life of an Indian.

The average span of life of an Indian is 26 against 56 of an European, though in New Zealand and other countries this average is still higher. Obviously, the man with a shorter span of life gets much less working time at his disposal. A man generally starts work at the age of 16. With an average life of 26 he gets only 10 years working time against 40 by an European. We thus see how our huge population for production purposes is not huge. It is large only in liability. With 40 million population and with 40 years' working period per head, England gets 1,600 million working years. Thus we find that while our population is ten times our working period is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ times of that of England.

Obviously, if we have to spend 10 times more on maintaining our population which produces only $2\frac{1}{2}$ times compared to England, our standard of living can never come up to the desired level. Production by every Indian on this basis should be one-fourth that of an Englishman. But it is worse than this. A substantial portion of the female population of

India is far less active than the female population of the European countries. Added to this, the over-all loss in production due to sickness and festivals is so considerable that the question of raising of the standard of living of our people, say to that of the level of Englishmen, is impossible of achievement without a national endeavour to work better and work more.

The average span of life of an Indian cannot be improved in a short period. This is a long-term plan. But this is an essential plan and it must be realised that unless we can substantially increase our average life, any talk of a higher standard of living would simply be a day dream. It is with this background that we should consider what we can do for labour.

**We must
Break the
Vicious Circle**

Labour needs decent wages, reasonable leisure, good house, arrangement for education of their children, healthy surroundings, provision against old age and sickness insurance. But we can achieve all these objects only through more work. And a longer span of life is essential. We are in a vicious circle. We must get out of it and enter into the circle of virtue. But all this cannot be done by refusal to work, by shutting our eyes to the reality and by non-co-operation. The facts must be faced. Hard work alone can take us to our goal.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF A PROGRESSIVE LABOUR POLICY

DINKAR DESAI

Servants of India Society, Bombay

Shri Dinkar Desai realises that only under a Socialist economy is a maximum fulfilment of the Social dreams of modern man possible. All that we can hope for is a purposefully-planned mitigation of the known rigours and horrors of capitalism. Adopting the Philadelphia Labour Charter as the yard-stick, he finds recent legislation restricting workers' freedom of collective bargaining a socially retrograde step. He rightly points out that only a more equitable distribution of our national income is the most fruitful guarantee of a higher level of employment. A progressive labour policy demands a controlled economy a controlled price policy as the desideratum of a dependable wage policy, control and restriction of profits of private industry, a taxation policy a well-knit programme of nationalisation of industry an economic schedule based on social priorities. Nothing less.



✓ THE fundamental principles of a progressive labour policy are clearly enunciated in the Philadelphia Declaration adopted by the International Labour Conference at its twenty-sixth session held in 1944. After affirming that labour is not a commodity, the Philadelphia Declaration says that the aim of every State should be to create conditions under which all human beings can "pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity." With a view to attaining this objective, the Conference directs that each nation should formulate a national programme which will include, among others, (i) full employment and the raising of standards of living; (ii) a minimum living wage to all employed; (iii) social security measures to provide a basic income to all and comprehensive medical care; (iv) adequate protection for the life and health of workers; (v) the provision of adequate nutrition, housing and facilities for recreation and culture; (vi) the assurance of equality of educational and vocational opportunity; and (vii) the effective recognition of the right of collective bargaining.

**Look at India
through
Philadelphia
glasses**

The programme enunciated at Philadelphia can be conveniently divided into three parts, viz., (1) the satisfaction of the basic physical needs which include adequate food, clothing and shelter and social security from all risks such as unemployment, sickness and old age; (2) proper facilities for educational and cultural development, and (3) full freedom for collective bargaining. In India, none of these objectives have been attained. It is common knowledge that a large majority of workers both in fields and factories in India are underfed, scantily clothed and very inadequately housed. Facilities for cultural development are practically absent, most of the workers still being illiterate and steeped in ignorance. Regarding the effective recognition of the right of collective bargaining, the right has been severely restricted by the recent enactment of the Trade Disputes Act of the Central Government and similar legislation in the Provinces. Thus we are far from a progressive labour policy as enunciated in the Philadelphia Declaration.

**Not inviting
co-operation
but creating
hostility**

Taking first the question of the effective recognition of the right of collective bargaining, it may be stated that the restriction of this right indicates a policy on the part of the Government under which active co-operation from organised labour is not invited in the improvement of productive efficiency and in the preparation and application of social and economic measures. This enforced absence of co-operation from workers in the matter of increasing national production is a serious obstacle in the way of economic development. This policy of compelling workers to work against their will by declaring strikes illegal, and of making arbitration compulsory, is not calculated to achieve the objective of increasing national production. Instead, a policy of securing the active co-operation of workers by winning their confidence, as is done in Great Britain, would secure the desired result. It is to be regretted that this economic implication of Government's industrial relations policy is not realised by them. It may be pointed out here that compulsion and penalties in the matter of industrial disputes is a negation of the effective right of collective bargaining recognised by the Philadelphia Declaration.

**Equitable
distribution
first funda-
mental of
national
economic
programme**

With regard to the question of raising the standard of living of the workers so as to secure to them at least the basic human needs such as adequate food, clothing and shelter, it must be admitted that an economic improvement in the condition of workers may not be possible beyond a certain limit unless the whole economy of the country is sufficiently developed. In fact, the total national wealth will have to be increased. In the case of India which is industrially backward, industrial advancement on a very large scale becomes necessary for creating adequate national wealth. But the industrial development on the desired scale is not possible unless and until all the products of the expanded industry are consumed in the country itself in the absence of foreign markets. India will not be in a position to capture foreign markets on account of international competition from those countries which are industrially advanced. Development of industries on modern lines in the hitherto backward countries in Asia and elsewhere is an additional factor which further reduces the possibility by having foreign markets for Indian goods. Thus the fundamental problem of increasing the total national wealth of India by adopting

a programme of economic advancement ultimately depends on the extent to which Indian working masses will be able to consume the goods produced as a result of industrialisation. In other words any programme of industrial development should be accompanied by a programme under which the increased national wealth is properly distributed amongst the mass of working population. This is the cardinal principle of a progressive labour policy.

Only in a socialist economy is maximum fulfilment possible

It is true that an objective of raising the standard of living of the masses to the maximum possible extent can be attained only under a socialist economy. But, even in the absence of a socialist economy, it is possible substantially to raise the standard of living of the people, particularly in a country like India having vast potential resources. The type of economy under which such a progressive labour policy would be possible may now be indicated.

Cannot have a wage policy without a price policy

Our first concern should be to see that mass unemployment is avoided and the whole economy of the country is directed towards a policy of full employment. The economic implications of mass unemployment, particularly in a country like India having no foreign markets for her industrial products, are very serious. Apart from the fact that human energy is wasted mass unemployment would be a serious obstacle in the way of increasing national production. Similarly, the prevalence of a low wage level in the country would have the same result. In order to prevent this, the economy of the country will have to be regulated so as to prevent mass unemployment and to maintain a proper wage level. The maintenance of a proper wage level is not possible unless prices are effectively controlled so as to prevent inflation. As Sir William Beveridge points out, "it is impossible to have a price policy without a wage policy." In other words, the problems of prices and wages are so inter-linked that one cannot be solved without the other.

It is thus clear that the first essential of a progressive labour policy should be the effective control of prices of all goods and services which enter heavily into the cost of living of the average citizen. The need for such an effective control of prices is equally great with regard to all essential goods which are temporarily in scarce supply. That price controls can be effective even during periods of short supplies by

adopting the method of rationing or equitable distribution, it can be seen from the success achieved by the British Government in dealing with this problem in Great Britain since the war began. In Great Britain, prices have risen only by about 30 per cent, while in India the rise is more than 200 per cent. Under a system of effective price control and rationing, a proper rise in real wages will not result in inflation. Having done this, a policy of full employment should be adopted with a view to utilising the maximum possible national resources within a minimum period of time.

A controlled economy means this and more

Under this type of controlled economy, it is necessary to restrict the profits of industry. The control of profits would not only make it possible to maintain a proper wage standard, but would also yield to the State an additional income which can be utilised for building the necessary social services for the benefit of the masses. (The control of profits of industry should be accompanied by a system of taxation under which the redistribution of the national income from the rich to the poor can be effectively brought about.) Indirect taxation, the burden of which ultimately falls on the consuming population, should be reduced; and direct taxation, particularly that which is not reckoned as a part of the costs of production such as death duties, should be increased.

Banking must emerge as a servant of national amelioration

The conversion of the banking system from a profit-making organisation into a national service is also necessary under this type of economy. If this is done, the production and distribution of goods and services can be undertaken ultimately in the interest of the whole community instead of a few capitalists. Along with this, a drastic reduction of the rate of interest and the maintenance of that rate at a low level is indispensable in a programme for combating mass unemployment. This will enable not only the Central Government but also the Provincial Governments and local bodies and other non-profit-making corporations to undertake programmes of public works by borrowing money at a reasonably low rate of interest. The banking system must function in accord with the general financial and economic policy of the State. In fact, it should become an agency of the State to give effect to the national policy.

Nationalisation of industry

The type of the controlled economy that is suggested will be greatly facilitated by nationalising all forms of transport including shipping and other basic industries such as coal, electric power, iron and steel, and heavy chemicals. Nationalisation of these industries is comparatively an easy task in a country like India where the basic industries are either very inadequately developed or practically absent in certain fields. A programme of developing the basic industries under public ownership should have the highest priority in the scheme of industrialisation, the ultimate objective of which should be the attainment of full employment.

You must work to a schedule

A programme towards full employment can be realised under a definite system of national planning under which the State will have to prepare a schedule of things that are required including the purchasing power of the population. A schedule of national resources that are available is also necessary. An estimate of the number and kinds of factories in different regions of the country and of the manpower to work them will have to be made. In other words, the total national resources and needs must be brought into relation to one another by deliberate State action.

A high level of employment working up to full employment

It must now be clear that the economic implication of a progressive labour policy is to maintain a high level of employment leading eventually to full employment within the prescribed period. Maintenance of employment on the required scale depends on the extent of national outlay, that is to say, on the spending of money on the products of industry. The more we spend in increasing national production, the higher is the level of employment. Thus, the "first condition of full employment", in the words of Sir William Beveridge, "is that total outlay should always be high enough to set up a demand for products of industry which cannot be satisfied without using the whole man-power of the country; only so can the number of vacant jobs be always as high as or higher than the number of men looking for jobs."

A set of social priorities

Such a programme of full employment can be undertaken only by the setting up of a long-term programme of planned outlay directed by social priorities and designed to give stability and expansion to the economic system. The guiding

principle of this long-term programme of planned outlay should be that of social priorities. Thus the most urgent task should be to fight the great social evils of WANT, DISEASE, IGNORANCE and SQUALOR. It is to this task that the full productive resources of the nation should first be directed, say, for a period of ten to fifteen years.

To sum up, the type of programme suggested above includes : (i) a substantial increase in real wages and the maintenance of a high level of employment ; (ii) national outlay for providing adequate number of houses, healthy food and clothing and other essential commodities at reasonable prices for the masses ; (iii) proper regulation of private investment with a view to expand industrial equipment of the country ; (iv) nationalisation of all important industries including the basic ones ; (v) a national budgetary policy based on the available man-power and designed to ensure, year by year, total outlay which would be adequate to create demand for the total national production ; and (vi) control over marketing of primary products.

**Measure
calculated to
blunt the
rigours of
capitalist
economy**

Without the measures indicated above, it may not be possible for India to have a really progressive labour policy. The changes that will be brought about by the adoption of these measures can in no way be called revolutionary. It is true that the ultimate ideal of obtaining full economic prosperity for the country and securing an equitable distribution of the total national wealth among the population cannot be attained without the establishment of a socialist order of society. But we cannot wait till socialism is established. In the transitional period, the type of economy indicated here is possible of realisation within the framework of a capitalist society. In fact, the measures suggested above are calculated only to modify capitalist economy so as to mitigate its rigours in the social and economic fields.

MAN-POWER PLANNING AND TRAINING FOR BETTER EFFICIENCY

A. N. K. NAIR, M.A.,M.Sc.,P.S.S., Cert. A.I.I.B.

Reviewing the training schemes mooted by Government during the war, and being conscious of the dire need for a continuous supply of adequately trained personnel for expanding Indian industry, Shri A. N. K. Nair projects a Ministry of Labour and Man-power planning as an effective co-ordinator as between training and employment opportunities. He holds that training for industry and re-training for acquisition of better skill, vocational training to promote small-way and cottage industries, co-ordinated and strung together into a comprehensive scheme and related to the requirements of the country, at any time, should form an integral part of a "grand plan of man-power planning".



THE PROGRESS of industry is conditioned by the efficiency of its work-people. One of the weak spots in the industrial development of India has always been the comparative inefficiency of labour compared to the more industrially advanced nations of the world. The Government as well as the leaders of industry in India have averred, time and again, that the absence of an adequate force of highly skilled technicians is one of the major factors that has arrested the industrial progress of the country. This lacuna was brought into bold relief during World War II when the demand for technicians and skilled personnel of diverse categories for the Defence Services, and to man the war became clamant and pronounced. The paucity of technical personnel was so great that the Government had to betake themselves to various measures in order to mobilise the necessary technical skill required for the successful prosecution of the war. It is proposed, in this article, to deal with the progress made in recent years in the training of technical personnel on a large scale.

**Training
Schemes
Unrelated to
Industrial
Needs**

Before World War II there was no co-ordinated effort on the part of Government and the industrialists to train the necessary technical personnel for the development of industries in the country. Workshops and industrial concerns that required skilled men had their own apprenticeship training schemes by which men, from among the workers, were given training over a period of time and up-graded to supervisory posts requiring greater skill and experience. There were also Government institutions imparting training for the foremen class of personnel. The number of such institutions, however, was extremely small compared to the overall requirements of the country and the absence of effective liaison between these and the industrial employers, to whose needs they were supposed to cater, created a certain amount of wastage of effort and loss of efficiency. The general lack of direction in the development of the industrial resources of the country was naturally reflected in the absence of any graded plan for the training of skilled artisans.

The advent of the War reinforced the growing realisation that without properly trained technical personnel, progress

in the direction of greater industrial production or towards improvement in the quality of the output cannot but be halting and haphazard. The war made it imperative to step up industrial production to improve the efficiency of labour and to fully utilise the country's resources in men and material. This urgency brought about certain changes in the economic set-up of the country. In order to mobilise national resources and press them into the service of a total war it was necessary to organise all available man-power and to direct it through channels leading to high-pitch production. Side by side with the demand of industries engaged in war production for skilled artisans, the different arms of the Services wanted highly skilled personnel for operating and maintaining a highly complicated modern war equipment. The Central Government had to embark on a plan for the training of skilled artisans.

**The Govern-
ment of India
took a hand**

In 1940 the Government of India set up a Technical Training Enquiry Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir John Sargent to recommend measures to equip young Indians for immediate employment as skilled technicians. The object of the enquiry was to determine the extent to which the existing training facilities could be re-organised for training persons for employment in skilled and semi-skilled occupations in war industries. The Committee urged short and intensive courses of training of about twelve months' duration. The necessary skilled supervisory personnel was to be secured by a systematic programme of up-grading in factories.

In accordance with these recommendations the Labour Department of the Government of India launched a scheme known as the Technical Training Scheme for imparting technical training to suitable persons who were later to be employed for work as technicians in the Armed Forces or in factories engaged on war work. The scheme was intended to afford training in various technical trades to men primarily from the artisan class so that, after the war was over, they would, by their increased technical skill and experience, provide an efficient class of skilled workers for the economic progress of the country. Recruitment for training as war technicians was not, however, confined to any particular class or classes of people but was open to all, subject to suitability in accordance with educational and physical standards.

Training was imparted in over 70 engineering and building trades. The qualifications required of candidates were broadly that they must be between 17 and 30 years of age, be of sound bodily health and, as a general rule, literate. The extent of knowledge of English and other attainments needed for entering into individual trades varied according to the nature of the trade. The duration of the training was about a year.

The first Training Centre under the Technical Training Scheme was established at Lahore in January 1941. As months went by the number of training centres increased and the training potential of these centres also rose. As the demand for technicians increased in volume and became more urgent, with the progress of the war, new and more training centres were opened, covering a wider range. At one time there were over 400 technical centres with facilities for 47,000 men. As many as 42,000 were undergoing training at a time.

The scheme was administered by a Director who was responsible for the technical direction of the scheme. Regional Inspectors of Training co-ordinated and supervised the work at training centres, and ensured the maintenance of correct standards.

Difficulty was felt from the very inception of the scheme in getting an adequate number of suitable instructors. To strengthen the instructional staff the services of one hundred specialist instructors from the United Kingdom were secured. These were detailed for work connected with teaching, supervision and trade testing.

Trainees were, on completion of training, trade-tested by panels set up for the purpose and given certificates of proficiency. Trade Testing Co-ordinators ensured a uniform standard in the working of the various panels.

On passing the prescribed trade-tests, trainees were passed to Services Training Centres and units or to factories engaged on war production. During the five years of its existence the training centres scheme turned out more than a lakh of trained men.

In addition to the Technical Training Scheme of the Labour Department, there was also the apprenticeship

training scheme organised in the ordnance factories by which thousands of men were given higher training in Government factories on production methods.

What was achieved during war time in the training of labour, hitherto unaccustomed to any kind of skilled occupation requiring manual dexterity and precision, was indeed remarkable. Large numbers of technicians gained experience in the working of modern machinery in war plants. Others gained practical knowledge in the handling of precision instruments. It can be asserted that the war-time training schemes laid the foundation for building up a skilled labour force for post-war India.

The Bevin Training Scheme

An important event in the history of technical training during war time was the decision of the Government in the United Kingdom to arrange for the training of Indian workers in factories and workshops in England. The object of this scheme, which was known as the Bevin Training Scheme, was to provide selected Indian workmen with higher technical training in England under modern factory conditions and on modern machinery, so that on return to India their services could be utilised to accelerate munition production. It was also the intention to inculcate in the men an appreciation of sound trade union principles and of British methods of co-operation between the employer and employees. Trainees were selected in batches on a provincial basis by National Service Labour Tribunals and from among suitable young men with practical experience of workshops. 14 batches consisting of over 800 trainees were thus sent to the United Kingdom for higher technical training and on return were absorbed in factories on work of a supervisory nature.¹

The primary object of the Technical Training Scheme was, as stated earlier, to provide a sufficient number of skilled personnel for the Services. The pressure of time and the need for keeping the requirements of the Services in the fore-front made it essential that training should be designed above everything else to meet the needs of the Defence Forces. Moreover training given in the civilian training centres during war time was only a preliminary to further specialised training at military training centres and units.

Postwar Training for Ex-Service Personnel

The needs of war are different from the needs of peace. The demobilised war technician was not equipped with the necessary knowledge and experience of peace-time industrial

production. There were also ex-servicemen who wished to acquire new skills in order to enable them to settle down to civilian avocations. The post-war training schemes of the Government of India aim at imparting technical and vocational training to the demobilised servicemen and fit them to skilled occupations in industry or to enable them to start small productive enterprises of their own. The training schemes are divided into two main categories viz., (a) Technical and (b) Vocational.

Under the post-war Technical Training Scheme facilities for training 12,000 men at a time are afforded in more than 50 engineering and building trades such as blacksmiths, boiler attendants carpenters, die sinkers, draughtsmen, electricians, instrument mechanics, moulders, riveters etc., at 115 training centres. Some of these training centres are under the management of the Central Government while the majority are private institutions that have placed the training facilities available with them at the Government's disposal. The duration of the course is normally 18 months. Trainees are brought up to Grade II standard while in a number of suitable cases apprenticeship training on production work, under factory conditions, is also arranged.

The Vocational Training Scheme provides training in over 100 occupations such as weaving, embroidery, lithography, commercial art, tailoring etc. and in the manufacture of many articles that can be produced on a cottage industry basis. There are over 80 training centres with a capacity to train 5,000 men. The object of these courses of training is to enable men either to obtain lucrative employment under manufacturing establishments or to engage themselves in small-scale production on their own.

Standardisation of Occupational Nomenclature

An important step was taken in bringing some kind of order into the multitude of occupational terms and nomenclatures current in the country when the 'Guide to the Occupational Classification and Registration of Applicants for Employment' was prepared and published by the Labour Department. Primarily meant for assisting the Employment Exchanges in registering applicants under suitable trades, it has gone a long way towards standardising and systematising nomenclature in respect of over 2,000 occupations. The Guide gives the name of the trade or occupation, a trade

index number and a short description of the nature of the trade.

Advisory Committee

In 1944, the Labour Department of the Government of India constituted an Advisory Committee on Technical Training. This Committee held a number of sessions, made a factual survey of existing training facilities and the annual output of trained men, and drew up a scheme for the training of craftsmen for post-war industry. According to this scheme boys of 14 to 18 years will be given training for a period of 3½ years in training centres and partly in factories on production work. It is considered that these men, on completion of training, according to the programme outlined under the scheme, will add to the class of skilled craftsmen and remove one of the chief bottle-necks in the industrial expansion of the country. The scheme is implemented by the Government.

The Future schemes must have a Wider Range

In planning training of skilled personnel for industry we have to take into account three classes of personnel: (a) Managerial, b) Supervisory and (c) Skilled workmen. Efficient organisation demands that training should be imparted at all the three levels. During war-time, there was a keen shortage of technical supervisory staff which was met by a process of dilution and upgrading. While both industrial concerns and the Government are taking steps to train suitable men at the managerial and supervisory levels, the number trained up till now has been woefully inadequate to meet the growing needs of the country.

Training Related to Employment Opportunities

An important consideration in the building up of an adequate force of skilled artisans is that training should be related to actual industrial development. For instance, it will hamper progress and create unemployment if there were no correspondence between the demand and supply of available skills in specific trades. This, then, requires that periodical assessment should be made of the demand for skilled workmen in various trades in order that training may be wedded to employment opportunities and industrial needs. Training, including vocational training, should thus become part of a progressive, comprehensive economic plan designed to promote full employment. A factual survey of the existing technical skill in the country should be the first step in the organisation of the country's man-power resources. We have at present but a hazy notion of the available skill in the

country in different trades and occupations. A census of skilled personnel is thus the first desideratum. The facts as revealed by such a census should form the basis of a vocational training and retraining scheme which should be planned from the point of view of the availability of employment as well as the future needs of industry. Training will have to be planned on a regional basis and inter-regional co-ordination achieved by a central organisation.

**Training
should
become an
integral Part
of Man power
Planning**

There is a growing demand for technical personnel of various categories but enough numbers with the requisite degree of skill, are not available. The problem, therefore, is two-fold: first, to train the necessary number of persons in appropriate trades, and second, to train them up to a high degree of skill. The second aspect of the programme of training is most important in as much as a large number of inadequately-skilled persons would constitute a drag on, rather than an aid to industrial progress. Moreover, the existence of such a class will create special problems of unemployment. They will raise psychological barriers in the way of suitable men and women taking training in vocations which will be advantageous to them and to the community. Even now the existence of a considerable number of such semi and under skilled persons, who are unacceptable to employers, is creating problems for government to solve. The way to check this growing evil is by providing adequate facilities for higher training of craftsmen. One error that has to be guarded against, however, is the indiscriminate training of large numbers of craftsmen without having adequate regard to the demand for specific categories of skilled persons. Training should be intimately related to the needs of industry. Otherwise, the country would be faced with the kind of unemployment among technical personnel that the country witnessed in the years prior to the commencement of the second world war, among men and women educated in arts colleges and schools. In spite of the present paucity of skilled personnel, the situation envisaged above may be a real danger if no conscious effort is made to strike an area-by-area balance between the supply and demand for different kinds of skilled workers. Side by side with adequate training facilities there should be an organised system of advisory service by means of which persons desirous of getting training for employment could be given

guidance as to the most suitable trades in which they may be trained with advantage to themselves and to the country. Training will thus become part of a comprehensive scheme of man-power planning for employment and production.

A Ministry of Labour & Man-power Planning

These training schemes should form a permanent feature of a Ministry or Department of Labour and Man-power Planning in the India of the future. A good deal has been said in recent years about man-power budgetting, in order to make the most effective use of the available man-power for national needs. The experience gained during World War II in directing the country's man-power resources to different spheres of war effort and in the interest of maximum production will naturally be of immense value in planning the distribution of labour for peace-time ends. War-time experience has shown that vocational training and re-training schemes should form an integral part of any man-power budgetting programme. In the U. K. the provision of facilities for vocational training to those who are in need of them has come to stay as a part of the functions of the Ministry of Labour. This is rightly so because training of adequate numbers in appropriate trades should go hand in hand with the balancing of supply and demand for various categories of work-people. To sum up, the Central Government's training scheme for artisans during war time as an experiment has proved of immense value; it has been continued into the post-war period in a limited field. In any scheme of man-power planning, training of workmen in suitable vocations should find a place and it is therefore, essential that the present schemes for technical and vocational training should be retained by Government on a permanent basis. Training in future has to be related to employment opportunities and needs. The problem to be faced is of great magnitude and complexity and a good deal of research is necessary before a satisfactory plan could be evolved. But in the interest of efficiency of the worker, in the interest of maximum employment and as part of a grand plan of man-power planning, vocational training schemes should find a place in any economic plan for India's industrial progress



